The New Mr. Howerson

Opie Read

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The New Mr. Howerson

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The New Mr. Howerson

By

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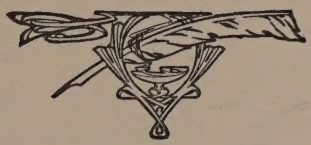

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The New Mr. Howerson

PREFACE

"You've written on this book long enough to warrant a preface," a friend remarked. "During four years you have worked at it, writing it twice with a pen, then turning it into a play, to catch at every possibility of dramatic action — then showing judgment by not producing the play. Now why don't you write a preface? Somebody might read it."

"Yes. And I could say that I know these characters, that I cannot believe otherwise than that they are living. With them I have kept close company — "

"Don't believe I'd say that. It would show that you have associated with some rather desperate fellows."

"And so has every man who has known this town for thirty years."

"But I'd leave it out. Take no reader into any except a respectable confidence. . . . You might say something about its being a departure from your other books."

"Though not a departure from human nature, let us hope."

THE AUTHOR.

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The New Mr. Howerson

CHAPTER I.

THE AGENTS OF JUSTICE

A cold northwest wind swept the streets. March, scolding dame of the year, shrieked her complaint. In the somber-clad throng that crowded the cobbled thoroughfare, no countenance seemed illumined with happiness. Slaves emancipated for the night, and worse than slaves, women of the sweat shops, struggled homeward to sleep, to awake with the ever-just sigh against fate, and then to return to the galleys of the soul. Dwarfed and mirthless youth, disappointed middle life and old age, victims of deadening toil and cheated of the balm of philosophy, all struggling to pull apart from one another, to be individuals, and yet each one but a type in a vast herd of anxiety and discontent.

But just around a granite corner, a tide of a different hue was sweeping, the tide of success in life: conscious power in the legalized throat-cutting of trade, buttoned up in cold and Puritanic dignity; vigorous youth, and ashen-jawed age — almost unable to walk but able to make ten thousand strong men walk all night, dreading the morrow — anemia in glittering motor car that seemed tremulous to break loose from all restraint and to leave blood, broken bones and death in its wake; men athletic with hope; women with nurtured complexions furred against the wind — all bent for home, for cafe

or for some place where amusement might be offered and rejected with ostentatious yawn: the world's eternal contrasts.

Through the drift of the mottled and cheaper throng there bumped and dodged and bumped again a man who elsewhere than in a human logjam would have attracted notice. Villagers would have honored him with speculations as to his identity, and the worthy postmaster, boaster of unbroken political faith for forty years, would have craned his neck to get a good sight of him. Among this man's marks of time was a studied mildness which seemed to whisper the lie unto itself, a look which, in a way Americanized, still bore remembrance of some half barbaric and smoky fireside far beyond the sea. Long wear had robbed his silk hat of its gloss; the tails of his frock coat hung far below the skirt of his cloak, and his waistcoat, when the wind exposed it to view, showed the stains of food forked up hastily from a beer-monger's table.

Somewhere in the past a more prosperous day had been his heritage. Adversity does not always stamp a countenance with sorrow; misfortune has sometimes a humorous trick, and sports with her unfavored child, mottling his gravity. Thus it was with Professor Hudsic, late of St. Petersburg, and later, it was said, from a political hole in the ground, the frozen bowels of Siberia. In Chicago he had lectured for the "cause," grazing the edges of the law. One of his meetings had been broken up by the police, and he had been warned that the penitentiary or even the gallows was waiting for him. Then he essayed the chair of English and Mathematics in a night school, in a slum district, and now, on this blustery evening, he was on his way to attend a committee meeting of an institution much nearer his heart,

and of which he was president, the " Agents of Justice."

Occasionally a policeman, seeming to recognize his blackish beard, would look at him as he bumped his zigzag way through the crowd. In a jam waiting for a bridge to swing back into position he was forced to halt, and here he stood with his hand on a railing, worn smooth with many a passing touch, and looked about him slowly; at the thin visaged woman with a package held close to her frail body, at the impatient boy, the pale girl with a wilted rose in her hand, at the blackened teamster sitting high on his load of coal, and at the old man, tottering toward his home not only for the night but for the rest not broken by the brazen bell.

" Poor, ignorant fools," the professor mused as upon each one he bestowed attention; and then, professor-like, he revised his decision; " or rather, poor victims of a succession of fools."

The bridge swung around. The crowd rushed forward, men, women and children leaping upon it before it settled; and when with a jar the rusty socket was found, the forward throng staggered as if the earth had quaked. " Poor wretches, always in a hurry," the professor mused, " always impatient to reach the scene of their slavery of a morning and impatient at night to return to the filthy desolation they call home. Time and again they have had opportunity to listen, but will time ever endow them with the spirit to act!"

He crossed the river and continued his way for a short distance, now walking rapidly through the thinning crowd. Turning into an almost deserted and ill-lighted street, he walked slowly, glancing upward as if seeking out a number. Halting and for a time looking about him, he pushed open the door of an entryway and stood for a moment at the bottom of a dimly lighted

stairway. A newsboy came through a side door and offered him a paper, the latest sporting edition. The professor smiled and shook his head but he gave the boy a penny.

"No, I don't want the paper. Wait a moment; I want to talk to you. Do you go to school?"

"Naw. Have to work."

"Why don't you go at night?"

"Have to sleep."

The professor smiled, the gas light flickering on his beard. "Good reasons. But come to the night school and I will teach you something."

"How to make money?"

The professor frowned. "Ah, you were born in this miserable town."

"No, in Poland."

"How old are you?"

"Twelve in the summer. Can't remember when I come here."

"I should hope not. But wouldn't you rather have education — wouldn't you rather know a great deal than to have money?"

The boy shook his head. "My father knows a heap of things and can read big books covered with wood and play on the old harp when we bring it out of the corner and put it by his chair. He's all crippled up and can't walk. He hasn't any money, and he says he'd rather be dead than poor all the time. Huh, I guess he would — he tried to kill himself with a knife, and he always says to me: 'You won't never be happy 'less you have money.' Huh, when I'm a man I ain't goin' to be educated and crippled and poor and try to kill myself with a knife. I'm goin' to have money."

"You're a bright little fellow," said the professor,

looking down upon him. "And here is another penny to help you on your way toward wealth. Wait a moment. Do you know the policeman on this beat?"

"Yes. He's a fat slob."

"Good. German or Irish?"

"Mick."

"Not so good. But is he too fat to climb stairways — three flights?"

"Gee! Him? He wouldn't climb *one*. He'd rather ride in a patrol wagon."

"Thank you very much. You may go now."

The boy darted out as if released from a trap, and the professor heard his cry echoing down the street. A man came down the stairway, and after a quick glance at him the professor stood aside to let him pass. Bits of paper whirled in from the sidewalk, and somewhere in the old building the wind howled like a hound. The professor began to ascend the stairs, scraps of paper eddying about his feet, the hound howling louder.

CHAPTER II.

ELECTING A MARTYR

In a room on the third floor several members of the executive committee of the "Agents of Justice" had come together, in response to a call from their president. Two rusty gas jets shed rusty light. Through the broken transom the wind gusts came and sportive shadows played goblin on the floor. Near the center of the room was a table, and on it were scattered newspapers and pamphlets, which, with a half dozen chairs, some of them crippled, carried out the appearances of what a card on the wall declared to be the "Reading Room."

In front of the table Oscar Henk and Otto Sengle walked up and down, apparently in deep thought, passing each other without speaking; Henk, dark, slender, and aside from his all-night saloon eye, as evil a looking rounder as ever pleaded "not guilty." Sengle was a sort of nondescript — you have seen such a fellow, struggling to summon character that would not come, easily and gratefully forgotten, an impotent snarl in life's warp. At the table sat John Batterson and Emile Zenicoff. Batterson, a big fellow with bursting "vest" and greasy elbows, had given himself to many lines that required no labor. His street preaching text, "The Brotherhood of Man," had attracted some little attention — from the police. One night they called him down from his barrel, knocked in the head of his rostrum and told him to move on. Denied the right of public pulpit,

he betook himself to the outskirts and solicited old clothes, in a low and not unmusical whine, having once been leading basso in a dive.

It was said in print that Zenicoff was of good family. This bit of not over-useful information was brought out at a time when he had been arrested for an impulsive infraction of the law, hurling a brick at a legislative candidate who in a speech from the tail end of a wagon had declared that the country was on the high road toward unprecedented prosperity. But personal appearance did not cast Zenicoff for the part. He seemed to be of timid, not to say of shrinking character, with a solitary look, like a sheep herder. But sometimes he talked, and when he did you could well believe that he had hurled a brick. And now, at the table he and Batterson were engaged in conversation when Professor Hudsic entered the room. They greeted him effusively, and Henk and Sengle turned from their walking up and down, warmly to shake hands with him. The professor waved each of his friends to a seat and then sat down.

"I am always glad to meet you, my fearless brothers," he said, leaning over and placing his nap-shedding hat on the table.

Batterson popped a slick button from his swelling "vest" and replied to him: "We thank you for the compliment, Mr. President. And permit me to say that we feel it is deserved, for I believe that each one of us has proved that he is fearless in the cause of — "

"Justice," suggested Henk boldly enough, though more than anyone else present he had cause to stand in dread of an application of the term.

"Justice," said the professor with a gracious smile that came slowly through his beard; "I love the word."

"Beautiful word," declared Batterson, "and with it in mind I was just explaining to Zenicoff how easy it would be to remove all oppressors of the people and run no risk of discovery."

Henk sniffed like a dog. "Do you get your dreams out of a short or long stemmed pipe?" Preparing to light his own pipe at the time he struck a match, set fire to the tobacco and held up the burning match. "The way to take life — so." He blew out the blazing splinter. "No mystery about it; perfectly plain."

"And sometimes," said the professor, "it is just as necessary to blow out a life as a match, to prevent a conflagration in society."

"Industrial society, yes," Sengle argued and Henk looked at him with a leer.

"Industrial bosh! My idea is to wipe out everything and start new. The world is too old; and the only way to establish justice and equality is to destroy and start fresh. As to the taking of a fellow off without detection — what's your scheme, Batterson?"

"Well," Batterson answered, looking from one to another and then returning to Henk, "my scheme, as you term my discovery, is that I can force the authorities to think a man's death an accident. He would be found with no trace of poison about him, no marks of violence."

For a second Henk's leer was illumined, promising to end in an inspirational smile. "Oh, I see," he said, "you would kill him with old age."

Batterson, the big butt of small jokes, was here a victim of the real or pretended laughter of all except Hudsic, who gestured his impatience. He addressed Batterson. "To your point, if you have one."

"My point is that I can kill a man and not be

detected, if you insist upon bluntness. I would seize him and hold him under water till he drowns.''

The others laughed and Hudsic turned away. Batterson defended himself: '' I don't see anything so funny, unless you want to laugh at the truth. And another good way is to secrete a time explosive bomb in your victim's automobile.''

Henk clapped his hands. '' Good, and if he has no automobile, buy him one for the occasion.''

Sengle was ready with a suggestion. '' And if you have resolved upon a reduction of expenses you might induce him to accept a motorcycle.''

'' Wait a moment,'' cried Zenicoff, breaking through the environs of apparent timidity. '' To save all expense you might drop him a post card, requesting him to kill himself.''

Hudsic arose and stood looking down upon them. He spoke and his voice was deep with seriousness. '' You men have indeed become truly Americanized, to turn everything into impotent levity. Hear me a moment. What we have to discuss to-night is vital to our cause. We have been called together to determine the best means of removing from the scene of his brutal activity one Calvin Whateley, capitalist, mine owner, street railway magnate and general crusher of the souls of men; a wretch gifted with so keen a sense of satanic or American humor as to grow genial at the sight of distress and to laugh at the wails of misery. It is not that we should leave the world in doubt as to the cause or manner of his taking off. That would rob just vengeance of its moral force. Society must know the cause and the details of his death. And the brother selected by us to take his life must be willing himself to die for the cause. Shielding his brothers, he must pay the extreme penalty of a martyr.

Is this plain to you? Do you realize the deep portent of this meeting? Let me ask again: Is it plain to you that the avenger must glory in his act while shielding this Brotherhood, the Agents of Justice?"

Everyone seemed moved to speak, but Batterson, the street preacher, was readiest with his answer: "Yes, it is clear, for we, the Agents of Justice, must be left undisturbed, to bring about other reforms."

The professor smiled upon him. "Batterson, you are British, but your grasp is not slow. And I have no doubt that any one of us will be willing most cheerfully to execute the commission — if elected, you understand."

"If elected," several of them agreed, and Sengle declared: "It will be a great opportunity for some one."

"Yes," said the professor, "for some modern Nazarene willing to die for toiling man. The election will be by ballot, of course, and every member is a candidate."

"And if he weakens," Henk found opportunity to say, "he forfeits his own life to us."

"Most assuredly," the professor declared. "But he will not falter. Ah, our priestess!"

Annie Zondish entered the room. When first she appeared in Chicago, it was the elder Carter Harrison who remarked: "She is a mere girl, but she has, with opportunity, the making of the most dangerous woman that has ever set foot on our shores." The years had passed, and now she was mature, boldly handsome, gypsy-like, sudden and swift in every movement. About her plain and meagre apparel there was but a bit of red, a bow at the throat, and yet, upon entering, she seemed to have reddened the yellow light. Everyone shook hands with her, spoke in compliment; but to flattery she

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gave no heeding ear. She tossed her hat upon the table and for a few moments she stood, arranging her wind-tangled hair. Then she spoke to Hudsic:

"Do you deliberate with the door unlocked, leaving any meddler free to walk in on you?"

Hudsic smiled upon her, nor was it a smile wholly of gallantry. In anarchy women may be an achieving inspiration but to man belongs the real executive power of destruction; and in Hudsic's casuistic "roundup," woman's wisdom attained its height when calling forth the superior wisdom of man. "When any meddler or policeman can shove open a door and walk in at will, he may know that the deliberations going on are well within the law. But we have not as yet entered upon serious deliberations. We were waiting for others; notably for you — and for George Howerson."

"I thought that George Howerson had come." She spoke to the assembly rather than to Hudsic. "I met him not more than half an hour ago and he said he would surely be here."

"I suppose," said Henk, "you are acquainted with the object of our meeting?"

In answer she addressed herself to the professor. "I ought to, since I inspired it."

"That is true," the professor spoke up. "It was so momentous a step that I hesitated, but she has convinced me that it must be taken."

"Then I am of the opinion that we ought at once to get down to progressive discussion. But I wish all the brothers were here."

"Only Howerson — " began Batterson.

"An American failure," Henk interrupted.

"Yes," said Annie meaningly, "the only real American here. He removes *that* stigma from our cause. His

people have for generations lived in this country. The newspapers and the pulpit cannot brand him as a crank of foreign birth. His election, of all of us, I should hail with joy."

"Shall we wait?" queried Hudsic gravely.

"It will not be necessary," came the imperious rejoinder. "He will abide by our decision."

Here Henk interposed with a leer. "Why not elect him by acclamation, Queen of Vengeance?"

"Each must take his chance," replied Annie coldly.

"No one must throw away his chance rather," amended Hudsic. "For the Brotherhood, for mankind — for himself — a glorious opportunity! To write in one glowing stroke his name on the enduring scroll of fame, to seize one burning moment of immortality — "

"A flight worthy of Howerson himself," Batterson avowed. "We vote how?"

"By nomination of the worthy ones, by election of the one most deserving — "

"By lot," declared Annie with an air of finality. "There must be no unselfish shirking of — *opportunity*. This is our first open assertion of our cause — first in action — and there must be no slip. Fate has pointed out the first to feel our condemnation; fate must choose the instrument. A card for every member; *one* with the word 'Justice' written on it. We shall each draw — "

"Each?" half sneered Henk, turning first to Hudsic and then back to Annie.

"Each," Annie said simply. "I will draw first — you next, Henk." His face went chalky.

There was a rattle at the door. "Who's there?" called Batterson. "Howerson?"

"Fool?" snarled Hudsic. "Save names for your street preaching."

"Me — Moy," came from outside the door.

"The Chink," breathed Henk, with a sigh of relief. The door opened and a grinning Chinaman came in. He bore a clothes basket of great size, piled high with washings. He set it down impassively, and turned to the group with an air of apology.

"Me late," he ventured. "Heap clowd. Allee time no gettee thlough. Big cop — big machine — gettee man lun ove'. Allee same no see. I no can hurree," he finished, his English becoming clearer as he proceeded.

"Just in time, Moy," Batterson the irrepressible vouchsafed. "We are about to draw lots."

"No!" came from Annie Zondish and Hudsic at once.

"He is 'set aside,'" she added with finality, using a cant phrase of their own.

The cards were prepared. With a flourish Hudsic inscribed one with "Justice," unlike the current likeness, rich with ornamentation. Hudsic brought forth his silk hat, the cards were thrown in and he gave them a shake that shuffled the pack.

"Will you draw?" he asked, holding the hat high before Annie Zondish.

"Why not wait for Howerson?" Henk wanted to know.

"Why?" asked Annie scornfully. "Why? Because he will ask nothing better than to be chosen. I know that he does not care to live. I know that he has tried to throw away his life as a thing no longer of any worth to him. I know that he is not only determined but desperate. He is one of America's over-educated failures. He was bred to the law and failed because he was a poet, and then he failed as a poet because he was a lawyer. But being a poet with a good share of — what shall I

say? Ah, a generous share of loud-sounding blank verse in his nature, he will gladly give his life for a cause. I will draw first for myself and then for him. Your hat, Hudsic."

But even as Hudsic extended his arm, he paused. There was a stumbling noise on the stairway, then down the long hall. A body lurched heavily against the door. The Agents eyed one another. "Howerson," ventured one. "Drunk," said another, yet without curiosity or surprise. It was Annie Zondish who sprang to the door. It flew open and a man reeled into the room and fell on the floor.

"You!" gasped Annie; "this of all nights!" Then a sudden pity came over her and she stooped to the prostrate man. "He's hurt," she exclaimed. "Here! help me raise him!"

"Hurt?" groaned Howerson. "Only my rage at the manner of it kept me on my way. I have been struck by an automobile — a big red car with dragon eyes that blinded me, a hellion driver who rode me down like a hare at a hunt, a heartless wretch in the back seat who spurned me contemptuously with his wheels — "

"I know," said Moy softly.

"There was an old man — he sold pencils on the corner. He was almost under the wheels, and I dragged him out. The chauffeur saw us. I swear he laughed — the demon. And I — I — over my prostrate body he plunged that snorting chariot of fire. I saw *red* that minute. I could have killed — "

"What?" asked Hudsic quickly. "A man? — or the representative of a class?"

"I detest the whole damned tribe — but him most. Fur-coated, pampered,— selfish greed and brutal egotism are his marks. He is fattened on the carcasses of

starving humans and grown rich on the blood of children yet unborn. Over the crushed bodies of his yet-quivering victims he relentlessly urges the car of his money-mad greed." He staggered to his feet. "He is the Goliath of them all."

"The Lord will raise up a David," quoted Batterson, casting a significant glance at Hudsic. Howerson followed the glance, and stared in mystification.

"What — " he began.

"We are going to act," nodded Hudsic. "Justice will drop her scales and take up her sword. She may be blindfolded, but she is not deaf; the cries of ravaged innocence, of outraged toil, of unprotected honesty, demand atonement — blood atonement! There is one who in himself comprises all our Cause abhors — he is marked for removal. His crimes cry to high heaven; we have heard humanity's call for vengeance upon him. Distinguished brother — "

"Distinguished — and by these seams and tatters! Conspicuous at least. What has been done. You were about to — "

Hudsic smiled upon him. "Brother, we were about to elect one of our brave number to — "

"Eternal fame!" Annie broke in. "Fate lies within." She pointed to Hudsic's hat. "By lot shall the fortunate one be chosen. We were about to draw. Shall we proceed?"

"Proceed," came from Hudsic.

"First," interposed Howerson, "who is the one to feel the avenging hand of the Brotherhood? Who is this outrager of humanity?"

"Of them all he is the deepest-dyed. He most richly merits death. His removal means the most to our Cause — to the world's progress. It is Calvin Whateley."

"What?" cried Howerson, starting. "But — but — that can't be."

"Can't be what?" came in chorus.

"The man who sat in the car that rode me down was named Whateley."

"It is the same," Annie Zondish asserted gravely.

"Allee same," Moy repeated, then shrank back into inconspicuousness as he encountered the curious glances of the Brothers. Howerson turned to Hudsic.

"What right has this heathen here?" he demanded. Hudsic placed a protecting hand on the Celestial's shoulder.

"He is one of our brothers, Mr. Howerson, and one day we shall hear the name of Chi Moy cried out in the streets of the world. On his faithfulness to the cause I would stake my life. Years ago, our brave forerunners who now sleep in beloved graves, blew oppression to atoms in the Haymarket, and singing 'Annie Laurie' stepped forward to gaze undaunted into the hollow eye of death. Our yellow brother would do the same."

Moy merely nodded his head, but his narrow eyes were gleaming. There was a long pause. Then he spoke. "Me — I see him, Mr. Whateley, in car. No see Mr. Howerson, but know an accident been done. Him Calvin Whateley — same die!"

"Good!" exclaimed Howerson. "You were drawing lots to see who should be privileged to rid the earth of such a reptile? A favor I crave," he declaimed theatrically. "I ask the Brotherhood to allow me first to try my fortune. It is granted?" His eyes, now bright with excitement, swept the circle of eager faces. They paused at Annie Zondish. A flush came to her face, and added lustre to her eyes as she gave him a

smile that brought a wondering "Ah!" from Hudsic.

"It is granted," she said at length.

Hudsic seized the hat and held it high above his head. Howerson advanced and reached up his hand. For an unaccountably long interval he groped about. Then his hand reappeared, clenched. With a broken laugh he threw it open.

Down upon the uncarpeted floor swept a flutter of white cards — the whole pack. One fell at the feet of Annie Zondish. With an exultant cry she caught it up.

"Justice!" she cried. "Justice!"

Howerson made her a sweeping bow. "I salute its queen! I tried hard to love the world, and it kicked me as I knelt at its feet. Through its favored ones it spurned me when I asked only for life. Now, I hate the world, and the central object of my venom is Calvin Whateley. For all he has done — for all others have done in his name — for all that the world has done me and my kind through him and his kind, my blood calls out for — " his voice rang out — "for blood. I will kill him!"

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD MR. HOWERSON

It is not easy to get at the cause of the success of one man and the failure of another, when both seem to be equally equipped, and appear to employ the same methods. "The man who does not make it an object to save money never does nor can do anything notable," says the Scotch master of steel, and you might tell him and other commanders of commercial strife that such a belief is a soul-dwarfing fallacy; you might speak the truth that the world owes its real progress to men who had not the temperament nor the time to hoard money; you might instance the fact that genius, poor as to money, has made it possible for Carnegies and Rockefellers to become powerful. You might do this in verity unalloyed and the average plodder seeking to keep his footing in the rough highway of life would laugh at you. A man, however, may be incapable of making money, of making a living, of fixing in paint a visual mood of nature, of evoking an opera from the bosom of the air, of harpooning a thought with a pen. Then must he indeed be an incompetent, and such a failure George Howerson accounted himself.

His sister Pauline had broken the Puritan hearts of father and mother, defied their authority and run away to comic opera. In London her beauty caught a dissolute title and she was blazed with pedigreed diamonds, which she had to surrender when a divorce had been decreed. Back to the footlights, and then she married a

sword, went to India, and a few years later when father and mother had passed away, she wrote to her brother George a letter in which were these words:

"They tell me that I have but little longer to live, and I said to them, 'No flattery, please.' I have done what? Followed my temperament. Where did I get it? A reaction from generations of contempt for all art. But to you who love me I will say that I have not been very bad.....I am grieved, dear George, when you assure me of your continuous failure. The poem you sent me is full of heroic fire, and I can't understand why the magazines won't take it. But this is not a heroic age. I would say 'have patience,' but in your blood and mine there is but little of that Christian quality. Our poor father, God bless his memory, preached his simple gospel year after year, always in little churches, and mostly to women who pecked the life out of our poor mother. But it was I who broke their hearts. Would it be virtuous to say, 'I wish I had lived a kitchen maid'? Perhaps so, but I am not that virtuous. George, the fact that you would not permit me to help you at the time of my prosperity proves that you have some strength of character. Then why don't you *compel* success? I intend no reproach, but you must remember that the family resources were drained to educate you. They 'degreed' you at Ann Arbor and 'lawed' you at Harvard, because it would sound big, while I was 'graced' by prudish old maids who were afterwards horrified to know that my voice had an ambition beyond Sunday morning anthems. .....George, it is better to be dead than a failure."

Not long afterward the press dispatches spurted the news of her death, and the newspapers printed a picture

of her as she had appeared in a fluff of comic skirts, the companion of an ugly bulldog, his head on her shoulder. The insult of this picture was fresh in George Howerson's mind; a shivering newsboy on the corner still held it under his arm. "'Better to be dead than a failure,'" he mused, quoting his sister's letter on his way to meet the Agents of Justice. For a long time the spirit of failure had seemed slowly to creep in his blood, like a disease, seeking the weakest spot; and yet he had striven hard, with study, with self-denial. But study and denial are not within themselves constructive. An extravagant blunderer may create while studious economy sighs out its impotent breath.

Tall, straight, strong, black-haired and brown-eyed he was, an athlete grown stale, a man who evidently had banished thought and had given himself to brooding. Without having acquired appetite for drink, he was not always sober. Failure drinks fat on beer, digs deeper a depth of melancholy, floats off a mind into sour vats of stagnant speech. Howerson had made his hard luck recital eloquent with alcoholic fervor, and then rendered it appealing with physical remorse, thus endearing himself to the Agents of Justice, who, ducking into many places to avoid work, found many a drink coming their way.

When Annie Zondish declared Howerson to be afflicted with epitonic blank verse, she had struck one of the notes of his character. When a youngster he had stolen from home one night, tramped three miles with the hired man and had seen John McCullough play the Gladiator, and afterward had played it himself in the barn; and since that time he dragged on his toes in fancy's barn, never practical, always striving for something he could not attain. It was natural for one

of his early friends to remark, "I guess George is a little off." In time he tried the stage — tried it sorely, some of his audiences may have thought. Failure cries out for consolation, and in this instance the balm was in the reflection that the day for real acting had passed.

"I'll strike my gait one of these days," he often said. "Every young fellow not a born plodder must experiment with himself until he finds out what he's best fitted for. A man may dig energy up out of himself, but all the energy that Grant could have dug up in a hundred years wouldn't have made him. His completion required the opportunity of war."

Such reflections were consoling enough, but required to do service year after year, they sickened, lingered as incurables and then died. Even then he was loath to attribute his ills to a weakness dominant in himself. The world is always wrong, individual man right; and fate, a clown posing as a grim Nemesis, laughs at the outcome. And of late the laughter, so far as it was inspired by Howerson, must have been boisterous, for the poet, pentameter protagonist, Blackstonian blabber, gave promise of a red-fire climax.

Now, stretching out tragedy-hungry hands to his meager audience, again he declaimed loudly: "I will kill him!"

Each one looked toward the door as if the elected avenger had been too loud, and upon Howerson, Hudsic smiled a gentle admonition: "Say rather that you will remove him. To kill sounds harsh."

But the avenger did not accept the amendment. "I like the word *kill*," he said. "It implies action, strength, determination. And to confer upon me the office of carrying the word to just and complete action is a

compliment to one whose modesty declares "— and here he bowed low, with his shabby hat in his hand — "one whose self-modesty declares him to be undeserving."

Annie addressed herself to Howerson: "Of all these men willing to die you are the most willing. You have striven hardest to achieve distinction among your fellow Americans, and therefore your failure, no fault of your own, is the bitterest. The system under which we live has been harder upon you than it could be on the rest of us, when it should have been kinder, for your fathers shed their blood to bring it about. Your nature is of the purple, but they have compelled you to wear the somberest of rags."

Howerson turned about and for a time walked up and down slowly, in subdued and heroic measure. Then he grasped Annie by the arm. "Ah, it is because you know that I tried to end my existence. You found me in a miserable charity hospital, suffering from poison." Then he brightened perforce. "But you gave me one more hope — to die for a purpose, a cause. Now you present to me that opportunity. I await instructions."

Annie, her eyes beaming upon him, called him her dear brother and sprang to him and would have put her arms about his neck but he caught her by the wrists, not ungently, and held her, looking into her eyes.

"You are acquainted with the real character of Calvin Whateley?" said Hudsic, more out of a desire to dissolve a tableau than to acquire information; and releasing the woman's wrists, Howerson turned toward him, his countenance bright with the inspiration of a picture alive and vivid in his mind. "Acquainted with his character! Is a man gazing upon an epileptic fallen in the street acquainted with contortion? Acquainted with Whateley's character? Listen."

"We are listening," said Hudsic, "but I don't like your interjection 'listen,' a word that Gypsy Smith and his co-revivalists urge to the brink of offense."

"Pardon the offense," Howerson replied. "Your rebuke is just. And now as to Whateley — a man who looks upon misfortune with contempt, one who regards honest toil as a sentence imposed by avenging justice. Driven by him to suicide, poor wretches in last agony have frothed his name. Once during a strike among his men, they sought to stop him as he drove in his carriage, to talk to him; and he snatched the coachman's whip and laid the lash over their thin-clad shoulders; and young collegians on the slippery front steps of journalism wrote it down as a heroic act — wrote it for disgraceful bread. Oh, yes, I know his character."

"Oh, does he not know?" Annie Zondish cried. "And, Oh, my brothers, have we not chosen wisely? Has not the true spirit been educated into him? Has not destiny marked upon him the sign of the cross? Brothers, you have called me your priestess, your inspiration. Then bear with me a few moments and take note of what I now shall say: Kings, presidents, rulers are institutions. Remove one and another takes his place. But capitalists, oppressive millionaires, are individuals. Remove one and his peculiar place cannot be filled, for no two individuals are alike."

"Very true," Hudsic agreed. "And now from general truths let us get down to specifications — to the best method of removing Calvin Whateley. We know that of late he has become careful, has policemen in his dooryard and in the corridors leading to his office; but it is necessary that our Brother Howerson should gain admittance to his place of business and — "

"And kill him on the throne of his iniquitous power," Howerson burst in, with swell of chest; and for a moment his shabby coat gathered in some semblance of a close fit, a coat plucked by Batterson in the suburbs and contributed to the cause. Batterson cried out, "Brave words, brother!" and Hudsic said, "Precisely," and then continued:

"And now the question is, how, without exciting suspicion, can our brother gain admittance? To go dressed as he is now would be foolish. He must go exquisitely garbed, the very mark of fashion."

The brothers showed astonishment. Howerson laughed bitterly. "Chesterfieldian philosopher," he said, "come out of your speculative dream. I go as a fashion plate when I can scarcely dress well enough to apply for a job in a ditch?"

"But that is to be remedied," said Hudsic, and he smiled upon the woman who stood smiling upon him. "With our present aim in view and with an industry which the most of us might well emulate, our sister has collected a sum of money quite sufficient for our purposes. And we shall exploit you as a gentleman, Brother Howerson."

"Gentleman," repeated the poet, the actor. "What a masquerade!"

Annie shook her head. "No, not a masquerade, brave brother, for I can see you now as you shall be, handsome and flashing."

"Yes," said Hudsic, "and to see you as we shall send you will be to admit you without question. And remember that you go as an 'Agent of Justice,' not from a society of low and brutal ignorance but from a brotherhood of educated men who have seen the world.

. . . Our sister, will you please administer the oath? ''

With a bow Howerson turned to her, and every one stood in solemn mien, the avenger with his almost crownless hat in his hand. Annie bade him raise his right hand, and up the tattered hat went with it, and shook in the air, emblem of his poverty. Annie began to speak, her voice unsteady, her lips trembling. '' Do you swear by all you hold sacred to kill Calvin Whateley? ''

'' I swear by all that I hold sacred.''

'' Do you swear that nothing shall turn you aside from your purpose, and that you will, if needs be, go to the scaffold as an ' Agent of Justice,' silent as to the other members of the Brotherhood? ''

'' I swear.''

'' And do you swear that if you falter you will give over your life to the Brotherhood to be disposed of without question? ''

'' I swear.''

Down upon the floor fell the tattered hat. Annie grasped the oath-taker's hand, and in turn they all of them grasped it; and the woman caught up the hat from the floor and set it upon his head as a crown; and he stood there pale in the yellow light.

. . . . . .

The meeting stood adjourned. The woman was the first to go, then silently the men took their departure. On the stairway Hudsic said to Howerson: '' Come with me to my lodgings and get the money.''

On a corner not far away, Annie stood in the wind and the sharp sleet. She turned about as the two men approached and said to Howerson: '' When I meet you again you will not be unknown. When I meet you — ''

"In prison," Howerson suggested.

"Yes, in prison — the walls will be radiant like a fairy's palace. Once more, good night."

She seized his hand, pressed it hard against her bosom, and then, catching her shawl up about her head, she ran across the street. For a time Hudsic and Howerson walked along in silence, bowed forward against the stinging gale, the professor showing inclination to avoid the light falling from street lamps and flooding out from hilarious brothels.

"Annie ran to get away quickly, and now you are afraid to be seen with me," said Howerson, almost bitterly. "My fame's growing fast."

Hudsic coughed and was ready with his reply: "It is not from physical but moral precaution, for the protection of the Brotherhood. Our institution ought not to be wiped out in its infancy." He took hold of Howerson's arm.

"You are right," admitted the avenger elect. "But for a moment I seemed to have felt a slap, and I spoke while my ears were ringing. It's all right. Let us avoid the lights and not mention it again."

Hudsic's room was up two flights in a thin-walled structure put up in a rush after the great fire. It had been condemned time and again but upon each occasion action was deferred by the discovery that its owner was one of the political bosses of the ward. It was tenanted by poverty. In its passageways was heard the scuff of the down-and-outer's old shoe, and on the stairs was met the ghostlike girl with the beer pail; and always from somewhere within those grim and rotting recesses came the wailing of a child.

Hudsic unlocked his door; Howerson holding a lighted match for him, opened it. Thus uncorked, there poured

forth a worse than kennel smell. Hudsic lighted his lamp and invited his guest to a chair, an old rocker with rheumatic joints. Hudsic sat down near a table spread with a faded cloth, once pictured with East Indians bringing in a captive tiger; and resting on his elbow gave himself to silence while Howerson looked slowly about him, at a shelf containing a few books, at the portrait of a whiskered Russian, at an old trunk gleaming with brass nails. In a corner was a couch whereon the professor dreamed his dreams of the brotherhood of all men, in another corner an oil stove, altar of garlic, onions and a certain sort of beef-liver stew, the whole when in full power capable of penetrating walls that had never been condemned.

Howerson broke the garlic silence. "I don't wish to keep you up, Professor, and if you will — give me the — er — appropriated fund, I'll bid you good night."

With a slight jerk of elbow Hudsic came out of his reverie to say that there was no need for haste, that he had a few ideas which he wished to communicate, "concerning your arrangements," he said. "Let me see. This is Thursday and you — "

"Ought to be locked up by Friday noon," Howerson supplied.

"Yes, easily," Hudsic assented. "To-morrow you can go to one of the big department stores and have yourself fitted out. It is not wise to wait for a tailor to make your clothes. You'll be easy to fit. Dear me, but you are a fine specimen; ancestry expressing itself. How tall are you? "

"Six-three."

"Away out of the ordinary, but in this town of big men they ought to fit you easily enough. The house tailor can very soon make any needed alteration. Now,

a bit of advice: You can get your outfit and pistol for sixty dollars at most. Dress yourself, silk hat, gloves and all before you buy the pistol. It will not be well when they search you to find you broke, or the possessor of only one shirt. Buy a suitcase, put several shirts into it and take it with you to his place of business; you can leave it down below. Other details I leave to you. Have you any idea as to the sum of money our sister succeeded in raising?"

"None whatever," Howerson answered, rocking slowly.

"One hundred dollars."

"What! You astonish me."

"So did she me. And she tells me that it did not take her long, in the garb of a Salvation lass. She did not go into saloons for the dimes of the drunkard and the superstitious, but struck higher places, the breweries. One old paunch, dying of submerged kidney, gave her forty dollars."

"And she trusted you with all that money?"

The professor made a noise like a man in a barber's chair blowing at a fly on his nose. "Why, er — assuredly. She knows that I am honest."

"And she knows, too, that she would kill you if you misappropriated the fund."

"As readily," agreed Hudsic, "as she will assassinate you if you fail to keep your oath."

"Never fear; no earthly influence and surely no intervention of the gods can turn me from my oath. The money, please."

"Yes, and a pledge in vodka."

He unlocked the trunk whose brass nails gleamed in the lamplight, and took out a rubber tobacco pouch. Then from the book-shelf he brought forth a bottle and

two medicine glasses, rusty with the stains of some bygone tincture. He supposed that his guest would need water, and brought it in a tin cup from a leaking tap in the corridor.

"I don't think that I'll want much of that stuff," said Howerson as the professor poured out the liquor.

"A little of it, sublime; too much — ah, you can fancy. Just a moment before we drink a toast. You need not look toward the door. This end of the shell is, with the exception of your humble president, untenanted. To your success!"

They drank and bade each other good night.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD CALVIN

About the city purple-jowled ancients were motoring a distinguished man from abroad. On the Lake Shore Drive he called out suddenly, "Hold up a moment, please." They halted abreast a great granite structure surrounded by an iron fence brought from Germany and exhibited at a world's fair. "Ah, who built this imperial prison?"

The purple-jowled ancients laughed. "It is not a prison; it is the residence of Calvin Whateley, one of our multimillionaires."

"Ah," and onward they sped. The distinguished foreigner looked back at the somber brows of the house, a dark frown in stone; and he thought this hemmed-in Pomfret ought to have more ground about it, that the monstrous gate should not be so near the portals; and he strove to picture and to estimate the character of the man who chose to live within those cliffy walls.

Nor would his task have been easier had he seen Calvin Whateley come forth, to walk slowly up and down the yard, leaning slightly forwards, hands looped back behind him, deep in penetrative thought. A tall and big-boned man, somewhat past sixty, with iron-gray hair, he showed a vigor always marvelous to those who knew that he had abused his strength. His mouth was broad, and he had a way of smacking it that sounded like a slap. To this man life was warfare and business a battle. Men bowed low to him; he was smiled upon,

feared and hated. But he was admired, the natural sequence of money greatness in America, in Chicago, where a new world materialism bursts out in smut-covered bloom.

There is nothing duller than the life story of the average rich man. It is the ever droning homily on economy and attention to details, but Whateley belonged not wholly to this class. He was not a bookkeeper; he did not look out for pennies to the extent of carrying them in a purse. To him a dollar was not a sacred thing, to be loved as by a Russell Sage; it did not so much mean starvation remote as it rang of power near. In his big schemes there was strong imagination, and a fruition was as a picture existent in the mind and then painted. A fault was that he sometimes neglected the proper tending of a fruit-bearing tree to graft an experiment. With him a difficulty was as a bit of algebraic figuring to a man enamoured of mathematics; and hardness of solution sweetened his interest. It was said that in general he hated man, but this was not wholly true, for the mind must dwell on the subject it hates, while Whateley gave but little thought to his neighbor. He loved the memory of a humorous and shiftless father and worshipped the picture of an old mother, as he had often seen her, carding bats in the light of a tallow dip.

Born of Scotch-Irish blood, near the old battlefield of Guilford Court House, North Carolina, with his infant fists he had sparred with poverty. In the gawk of departing boyhood, with brown jeans trousers too short for him, he arrived in Chicago, penniless, to be mocked by youngsters in the street and laughed at by men who years afterward shivered in his presence. In rain and in mud he rolled barrels of salt down upon the sailing

vessels, the humorous butt of his rough fellows; and at night in a sailor boarding house where brawls were wont to break out and blood to flow, he studied the books brought from the old schoolhouse where the red sedge grass waved in the wintry wind. With his first savings he bought a crippled hand cart, loaded it with apples and went forth crying his wares. But Italians attacked him and he fought them, breaking the nose of one, and with a bit of scantling caught up from the ground, laying another as senseless as death itself; but re-enforcements came and his cart was demolished. For a time he was laid up; then he came out, not as a laborer or a peddler of fruit, but as a speculator in land. In his nearest approach to a suit of respectable clothes he bought a bit of ground on time, sold it three days later, pocketed two hundred dollars and went about seeking another bargain, found it and profited. Then he bought new clothes, opened an office, and evoked from a down-easter a Yankee's most generous compliment: "That Whateley's a damned smart fellow." With an occasional backset he prospered, bought buildings, shaved notes, and crushed the unfortunates whose names were affixed to them.

He saw the mighty fire sweeping from the west, saw his buildings crumble, heard a city's wail of despair borne upon the wind, and to an acquaintance he said, "Stop your whining. It is not the death but the birth of the town." By the time the ashes were cool he was building again. Fortune came swiftly and sometimes from unexpected sources. His far-exploring eye saw a chance in Indian lands and he made three millions within a year, with the national government as his agent — and his victim, some of his envious and admiring enemies declared.

On one of his trips to his native neighborhood he met a young woman with whom he had gone to school. No, he had not carried her books, had not missed a word perforce that she might spell him down. And she was getting along apace when the thought came to him that possibly he might be in love with her, wondering how it was that he had overlooked her charm and her virtues, and to her matured cheek he brought a blush when suddenly he said to her: "By the way, Callie, I am somewhat pushed for time, as I have just received a telegram calling me back, but I have been thinking about you, thinking that you ought to be my wife." He looked at his watch. "Haven't much time to spare, as my train — "

"I will marry you, Calvin," she broke in, and he was greatly pleased with her readiness of decision. He grew to be deeply fond of her, and when she died, years later, leaving him a son and a daughter, his heart gushed forth in a torrent of grief, to find solace, his enemies said, in crushing a foe who suddenly had strayed too far within the range of his power.

It was Whateley's hope that his son Daniel might carry into another generation his own varied and divergent work, but Daniel's mind had early shown distaste for the strain which to his father's nature was like strong drink. Daniel grew to be strong enough, was sober enough, and in school and at college was inclined to be studious, but he was not a second Calvin Whateley. "I want to be a lawyer and then a politician," the young man had said, and the father sat for a long time without speaking, the ash falling from his cigar, the fire dying out. He shifted his look over the characterizing features of his offspring, his sandy hair, his bluish

eyes inclined to squint in a strong light, at his mere dab of a nose; and then came to him the anger-cooling balm of humor.

"Dan, you were first announced to me one anxious night as I walked up and down, and do you know what the physician ought to have said? He ought to have asked me if I could take a joke."

Whateley relighted his cigar, and a glow of red mounted upward into the young fellow's hair.

"Father, I beg your pardon, but I am not a joke. I am in earnest."

"No, not a joke, Dan, but a sort of cartoon of my hope."

"But can I help it? Wasn't I born this way. You have had a lot of men to work for you, men selected by your judgment and experience, and you haven't found the right one yet. Then how can you expect me to happen along and fill the bill?"

Whateley stood up, placed his hand on Daniel's shoulder, patting it slowly. "You got me there, my boy. Of course you can't help it."

"And am I to be a lawyer?"

"Well, as to that I don't know, but you may try."

In time he took the course, was admitted, a laughing stock to Whateley's enemies; and they gleed it about that the old man had refused his devoted son a living. Detraction shut its eye to the young man's peculiar independence. Those somewhat acquainted with the truth, materialistic to the marrow and commercial of blood, termed a man degenerate who would turn from the wielding of a mighty power to the sneezy dust of a lawyer's library.

The Whateley home was never a social court, and if the young lawyer was a toast among women, it was

as a sort of buttered toast. Among the young women whom circumstances urged that he should meet was a Miss Harriet Tarkwood, daughter of an extensive dealer in fish. Her posed and rehearsed modesty was fetching to Daniel. He nibbled her hook, found the bait sweet, bit harder; and in her quiet waters she played him, let him tug for a time amid the rushes, landed him on a white-clovered brink and over his final flop imparted the tearful information that she could not live without him. To father's home he brought her, a shrinking bride, threatening a time when from the world and grosser flesh she would withdraw her mind and center it on her nerves. After several years and about the beginning of this chronicle, Daniel took a position in the state's attorney's office, to fit himself for politics. Old Calvin laughed with the crackle of Indian summer leaves underfoot, and said: "Ah, I see. In order to prepare yourself for politics you are going to take a course in criminology. Go ahead."

"I am glad you don't object," Dan replied, gratefully. "Harriet thought it was hardly the right thing. But I am afraid that sometimes she judges too much with her nerves. And by the way, they are just about the same this morning."

This was a bit of news received by Whateley every day, delivered by Dan or Harriet herself, and whenever imparted by her the occasion was made impressive with drawn mouth and lips too thin ever to have given the kiss of physical love.

How different from brother was sister. In the girl the old man saw himself repainted by a finer artist. In her his strength of mind was more than suggested. Opposed, she would have fought as her father had been compelled to fight. Not in the business world and surely

not in social life are women necessarily gentler than men. But the daughter, while having the temperament of her father, possessed not his caustic harshness. "If she did," said the fish dealer, father of Harriet, after striking Calvin for extensive indorsements at the bank, "she would make some poor fool a hell of a wife."

In Europe the princess is beautiful and in America the heiress of millions cannot be otherwise than handsome. But poverty could not have stripped Rose Whateley of her charm. With lighter hues the sun had streaked her amber hair, for bareheaded she played golf; and at a country club men had for the moment forgotten the old man's wealth to watch her graceful swing, her drive. Her complexion had in a way defied the sun, and it was a joy to hear her laugh, deep from her bosom, rich with life. A foreign nobleman, with a retinue of servants and debts trailing him, thus poetized her eyes when she smiled, "Olives illumined," and he thought that for this she ought to marry him, and knowing that it was not his soul that sought her, she laughed him forth on his way across the continent.

To his daughter Whateley talked business, at home, while Dan sat by and accepted gingerly the occasional word addressed to him. At rare times the lawyer would risk an opinion, nearly always met halfway by a resigned smile from the old man; and in rebuttal tone Daniel was wont to say, "Well, now, really I don't see why I shouldn't know as much about it as Rose."

"I don't know either, my son, but you don't."

"By George, dad, I believe Rose is working you, just as she was working you the other day when she said she'd like to take a course in a business college. Why don't you work him the same way, Harriet?"

Rose laughed low mellow music, like lazy water lap-

ping a moss-covered rock. Two companion wrinkles stood upright on Harriet's narrow brow, in answer to her hurt, and she said that her nerves did not condition her for such a strain; and as this talk chanced at the breakfast table, the invalid proceeded upon the obliteration of a third strip of bacon, a demure cast loitering in her eye. Rose came smilingly to her own defense. "Dad knows I'm not trying to work him. Of course I don't care for dull business, but in big schemes there is poetry, Mr. Daniel. It's not much to see a man trundling a wheelbarrow, but it is something to see a man pull a lever and start a great railroad train. There is enough thrill in a one night's dream launched into reality at noon to serve a dozen poems, written by the anemics of to-day."

The young lawyer said "Wow!" and with her reproving eye his wife reminded him of her nerves.

"Dad," said Rose, "when are you going to learn to play golf?"

"Shortly —"

"Good!"

"Shortly after I am admitted to the Old Folks' Home. They tried to put death on me in the form of whist and now they want to cripple me with golf. Look at old Callison. He used to have an idea or two, but now he can't talk about anything but golf, a polly wanting the eternal cracker. What's that? I need some sort of recreation? Not if it is to boss me."

There was one other member of the family, at this time upstairs asleep, Dan's boy, beautiful youngster, Calvin Whateley junior; and upon him gushed forth a grandfather's recrudescent love.

One morning in March a year later, when Dan, his wife and son had lingered through a summer and winter

abroad, Rose said to her father as pulling gently upon his arm she walked with him down the hall toward the front door: "This will be a great day for you, dad."

"Yes," he replied. "Little Calvin returns. But why the deuce didn't Dan wire as to what train he will be in on? I do think he can neglect more important things than any human being I ever saw. And I'll warrant he'll bring Calvin to the house instead of the office. If he does, send the little fellow down at once."

"Are you going to be very busy to-day?" she inquired as they halted at the door.

"Always busy; but never too busy to see him."

"I know. But I may drop in sometime near noon. I have some business with you."

"No recreation scheme, understand." he admonished her, and she laughed, her head on his shoulder. "There, I must run along."

CHAPTER V.

HUNTING A BED

With a hundred dollars in his pocket, the price of his shroud, George Howerson came out from the professor's liver-scented roost and stood where the cold and purifying wind swept down from the Dakota plains. He gazed off across the river, toward blazing restaurants where amid music and laughter, black-garbed men and furred dames were feeding. Hunger, sharp as a puppy's tooth, bit him, for not since the day before had he eaten, and then but a morsel caught up as by command of red-armed barkeeper he moved along. "A strength of purpose however strong must be fed," he mused; "and must be slept," he added. "So to supper and then to bed." From the woman's fund he took five dollars, shifted it to another pocket, the only remaining sound one, and strode onward toward the river, posing in the dark. He felt that of late his mind had been wandering but that now, with his great mission, it was settled and strong. On a bridge he passed young Germans singing a stein song, and to himself he said, "Ah, before many hours you will have learned my name, but you will not know that you sang to me to-night."

The propriety of rags, the modesty of a tattered hat, pointed out the brazenness of attempting other than a basement feed-trough, and into one of these he went, careful on the sleety stairs; and here he ate, the proprietor eyeing him in the fear that he might not be able to pay for so prodigal an order. But when the

five dollar note flashed forth, suspicion shut its eye and became genial with the information that it was a cold and blustery night. Now arose the bed question, simple enough surely for one who has money, but rags and tatters unfurled again their timid caution. Looking about for a long time, passing one place after another as too high up, he entered a " hotel " at whose door the driver of a garbage cart might have hesitated.

" What do you want? "

" Beg your pardon, but I should like to have a bed. I have the money to pay for it."

" Here, go on with you. What do you take us for? A paper mill? Out! "

Out he went, and into another foul-smelling hole that seemed in the violence of its stench to be more " modest " than the one before, but he was set again adrift. His step quickened as if by an inspiration, and he recrossed the river, headed for the purlieus of the ten-cent lodging house. The first one was full. At the second, still lower in all but price, the manager said, " I think we are loaded to the guards, but come in here and wait and I'll go see if I can find you a bunk." The floor of the room wherein he waited was covered with tramps, a morgue of dead rags. One old roadster rose up upon his elbow, as if out of a comic supplement, and said, " What, waitin' to see if you kin git in amongst the 'ristocrats? Where'n hell did you git ten cents? "

The keeper returned and beckoning to Howerson, commanded him to follow. He led the way into a passage, and as Howerson was going out the soak called after him: " So long, Rockefeller's son. Tell the old man I'll answer his letter as soon as I get time."

The bunk was a mere slab, furnished with a bag of

straw for pillow and a strip of old carpet for quilt. The room was not large but must have contained fifty bunks, all occupied.

"Money in advance."

"Here you are."

Howerson took off his shoes, realizing that he had been walking with one foot bare on the ground. Over him he drew the dog-smelling cover and lay on his side, his money pinned over his heart, pressed hard against the board. The place was noisy with snore, cough, groan of distressed dreamer; and through the thin wall there came from a moving picture show the dinner-pail pathos of a woman's song. With his head on the musty straw he mused, "To-morrow night I'll not be afraid of being robbed. These snoring wretches will nearly all of them kill themselves, and serve no purpose except to rid the encumbered earth, while I — I shall die a martyr. In my cell I will write poetry, and the damned hounds of the press will snatch at it. Women will read it and weep and write to me, to tell me of my great soul; and men of letters will marvel that their inspired fellow could have done such a deed. They will call me a genius — genius, sweetest word in any language — genius — and when I have metered his death groan and rhythmed the terror of his glassy eye, the critics, vermin of letters — " This last figure so pleased him that he repeated it over and over, until taking a tune to itself, it ran in his mind like a song. "Vermin of letters" lulled him to sleep, to dreams; and he saw old Calvin Whateley sitting in his office, laughing over a telegram which he held in his hand. The avenger spoke and with a laugh of victorious delight the capitalist threw him the dispatch. "Here, read that," and catching up the paper

the dreamer read, "The backbone of the strike is broken. One hundred of the miners' children have starved to death."

"Good!" cried the avenger, "and now it is my time to laugh," and with that he fired — and jumped out of bed. A door had slammed. The manager had entered the room. "Come, turn out all of you," he commanded. "Hurry up there, old daddy. What? You can't get up? You've got to. I'm not going to let you die here, I'll give you a pointer on that. Help him up, some of you fellers, while I call the ambulance."

As Howerson was going out into the street someone called to him: "Say, there, just a minute. He halted, turning about, while toward him shambled a man too young for such a gait, but outcasts soon acquire a physical hypocrisy. "Say, pard, you walk like a fellow going to breakfast. For the Lord's sake let me go with you."

"All right, but you'll have to leave off that shuffle and walk like a man."

Together they went toward the restaurant wherein Howerson had feasted the night before; and looking aside at his companion the avenger estimated that he could not be more than old enough to sell a vote. "Where are you from, youngster?"

"Out in Iowa. I went through the state university there and — "

"The devil you did."

"That's just about it — the devil I did. I went back home to our moral burg, got a job in the railroad office, but at night a party of us would bunch around a jug out in the weeds, and pretty soon it was all up with my job. Then I came here, but my love for the jug came along with me; and by the way, just give me ten cents and I'll let the breakfast go."

"Do I look like a man that could spare ten cents?"

"No, but you walk like one, and besides that you slept up among the aristocrats last night. What do you say?"

"No. You need something to eat."

"But it's not a question of what I need but of what I want."

"Good enough, but I think it's a question of what you'll get. But what is to be the final outcome? Did you ever think of that?"

"Oh, I guess I'll brace up some day."

"That's the guess of most of us, but in the majority of cases we guess wrong. A man may look forward and fancy that he sees his reformation in the distance, but as he goes forward it flees from him. Reformation comes only out of an aim in life. Settle upon something that you are determined to achieve, and reformation will grip you."

"Do you preach in the first or second Methodist church? But don't walk so fast."

"I'm not preaching," said Howerson, holding up in his pace. "I am talking facts."

"You talk like a man that ought to have done something yourself, but I don't know that I ever saw your name on a billboard."

"You don't know my name, but you will, if you ever hear the cry of a newsboy. My name is George Howerson. Keep it in your mind until noon and then it will stay there of its own accord. Here we are, down in this stewing hole."

The boy was retched by the smell of soured food, and drawing back from the counter he pleaded, "Pard, give me a dime and let me go. I can't eat anything. Damn it, man, I need booze."

" Here's fifty cents. Go to a barrel house and drink yourself to death. It's the best thing you can do."

The young fellow shuddered. " Go on," Howerson commanded him. " There's no hope for you, and the sooner you croak the better. You are a weakling and I haven't any more time to waste on you."

The youth clutched the piece of silver until it was almost embedded in his flesh, grateful for the questionable generosity, but with a lingering spark of spirit resenting the grewsome admonition: " I'll not follow your advice. I'm going to reform — right away, to-morrow! " Howerson rhythmed his thoughts thus, " Every day is a rivet of steel, and every moment a hammer's stroke." Then of a sleepy-eyed girl with touches of black about her eyes, he ordered his breakfast, the boy continuing to stand at his elbow as if he had left some vital thing unsaid; and when the girl was gone he said it: " If you think that way, I won't take your money. I've got some little pride left. Here, take — " but his hand remained tight; his spirit was willing but his flesh was strong; and turning about quickly he ran up the stairs.

" He'll not have nerve enough to do it," Howerson mused. " His eye looks out of a weak soul. But then he is not to blame. Fate has not decreed him a mission."

The process of eating weakens or strengthens a resolve. The cud-chewing cow is not so much given to quick incentives as the horse, but she is more thoughtful, at least more contemplative. Mastication extracts the final taste of a thought; and Howerson swallowed the juices of his mission and found them sweet. When he arose he felt that his determination, if possible, was stronger,

clearer; and in his mind he heard the cry of his martyrdom, a glory-anthem in the upper air.

It was still early when he came up out of the reek of the "hash-trough," and for a time he walked about waiting for the big department stores to open. When the hour came he entered the portals of a world-known establishment, and was confronted by a first or second "walking gentleman" who commanded him to move on, not inside but out. Then he realized, as he might have been taught by his lodging house experiences, that palaces of trade must be approached in gradation. Stepping quickly, with the incentive of a suddenly inherited relief fund of thought, he hastened to a place where cheap secondhand clothing was offered for sale.

"I want to rent a hat, a coat and a pair of shoes for three hours."

"Rent 'em!"

"That's what I said."

The keeper of the place, an old man with patriarchal beard but hawk-eyed, looked at him. "Don't you think it would be safer for you if I'd make you a present of the goods in the first place? Rent 'em!"

"I'll put up the amount of the price and take a receipt, the money to be refunded when I return the goods."

"Ah, you got money?"

"Enough for my purpose, I assure you. The fact is that last night I was robbed and compelled to exchange clothes with a tattered wretch."

"Then how have you money this morning?"

"I — er — had some loose money in my hand — as I held it up, and it escaped their search."

Wag went his shrewd beard. But why should it make

any difference to the patriarch? Had any such circumspection ever entered into the preliminaries of his trading?

"All right, I rent you, but if you are not back in three hours, the goods are sold. You hear?"

Howerson heard and agreed.

Not much time was required to make the selection. The price was paid over, one hundred percent on the original investment, the receipt given; and now, somewhat more presentable but not a great deal, Howerson returned to the palace of trade. He was admitted and conducted to the proper department; but when he had made known the extent of his prospective purchase, the attendant stepped lively and called him "sir." He insisted that pains should be taken in the fitting of his long coat, of a pattern which in America they call a "Prince Albert," and of which in England they say "We don't know why." The other purchases were easy, but the gloss of the silk hat mirrored his surprise at its price. In his mind he counted his money and bought the hat; and when he had adorned himself with it, the "walking gentleman" who had ordered him to move on, took polite occasion to smile upon him and to bow as he was passing down an aisle.

He bought two suits of cheap underwear, socks, neckties, and putting them into a suitcase purchased in the basement, he was ready to go forth to return the rented wardrobe. Then he thought of an overcoat and again in his mind fingered over dollars and cents. But he must have an overcoat and bought one, not of a family with the "Prince Albert" and the mirroring hat, but good enough, as he would take it off before entering Whateley's private office, the death chamber.

A clock told that he had an hour to his credit, but

he lost no time in returning to the secondhand mart of renovated rags; and the patriarch bowing low, returned the money and hoped that his lordly patron might prosper. Now for a bath and a shave, and when the transformed man appeared at the door of a barber's shop the manager of the place called out, "Come in, Major." New and clean he came out, thrilled with man's vanity when he caught the admiring eyes of women as he passed along, deigning to smile upon one of them, believing that she half-halted to loiter. He hastened on toward a shop where pistols were for sale.

"Ah, good morning, sir. Can I serve you?"

"Yes, if you please. I am going out West and I want a pistol."

The dealer, lately from that part of the country, flashed a wink at a companion in arms who stood farther down the counter.

"Well, sir, I think we can fix you up. About what sort — "

"Makes no difference so long as it carries a big ball. What's this one?"

"That's a 'Bulldog,' — but it's only a very cheap — "

"But would it kill a grizzly?"

"Yes, an elephant, for that matter."

"Go off every time?"

"Yes, it's a center fire. But I thought you might want a — "

"A politer one, eh? No, this will do. Some cartridges, please."

"Let me take the number of the brute," said the dealer, meaning the "Bulldog." "And, by the way, you are not allowed to load it on the premises."

But the work of inserting the cartridges was quickly

performed behind an ash barrel, in an alley, and the feeling that in his pocket was a deadly power, an agent of the coroner, a speed to Eternity, incited him to a near-cut toward Whateley's office. He turned into an arcade wherein was wont to stand an old man in front of his bookshelves laden with cast-off print, arithmetics, geographies, tattered pamphlets and the purloined lectures of Ingersoll. Near by at a small table sat a card writer and Howerson accounted himself fortunate, for thus he was reminded of a detail overlooked. "Can you write me a card that will look exactly like an engraving?"

"Look better," the artist assured him.

"Yes, I know that, but will it look *like* one? I don't want any dove flying with an olive branch in his bill. I want my name, and without a flourish."

"How many?"

"Only one."

"One? Why, that's a funny order."

"Well, write it and I'll give you fifty cents."

The eye of the artist brightened and he took up his pen. But emotion incident upon the fall of sudden fortune shook his hand and he spoiled two cards. With the third attempt, however, he regained his knack and produced a work to his liking.

"That's good," said the purchaser. "Here's your money."

Passing through the archway out upon the street, he saw several men who with ropes and windlass were elevating a heavy iron safe into a third story window. On the opposite side of the thoroughfare stood idlers, gazing. Throwing a theatric look at the toilers the tragic dreamer mused: "Ah, poor devils, I die for you." A newsboy crying a noon edition thrust a paper toward

him, which he ignored, but he gave the boy ten cents. "Trumpeter of my fame," he said, hastening onward.

In his mind he took stock of his resources, and found that in cash his estate amounted to twelve dollars and twenty-five cents — enough — and his heart beat high and his blood leaped as he caught the strains of a blind man's fiddle. Boys, old men, solicited the favor of carrying his suit case, and along the curb his ear was saluted with the hackman's "Keb, keb, sir!" Around a corner, and now toward the "Whateley Building," its grim cornices in the clouds; and he knew that on the tenth floor the dragon of finances had his lair. With a cigar dealer below he left his suit case, and was shot upward.

In the corridor on the tenth floor he passed a policeman and entered an anteroom wherein sat Big Jim, said to have been a prize fighter who by a narrow margin missed national fame, now serving as office boy to Calvin Whateley. Jim bowed in the presence of Howerson, and with a prize ring prance met him to take his overcoat.

"I wish to see Mr. Whateley," said the visitor.

"He's busy now, sir."

"Here, give him my card."

CHAPTER VI.

THE TORTURE CHAMBER

Old Calvin always came early to his office, to tighten the screws of the day, Big Jim said; but on this particular morning he arrived somewhat earlier than was his wont, to grapple and to choke the nagging life out of new worries. He went through the departments of his establishment, stirring things up with his eye, causing more than one surprised idler to snatch suddenly at his work; and growled his way into his own workshop, known as the "torture chamber." It was a large room furnished mainly with a big flat-top desk always heaped with papers. On the walls, covered with dark burlap, there were no pictures, but in one corner stood a bronze bust of Cromwell. The floor was soft with a thick carpet. The window shades were dark, and the radiator was painted black.

Just as Whateley sat down, stirring among his papers, Big Jim looked in upon him. "Jim," said the old man, "you were drunk yesterday," and the giant gasped his astonishment. "You needn't deny it. I could smell you all over the building."

"That's very strange, sir," Jim replied wonderingly, as if striving to solve a problem.

"Very. And you jammed the elevator boy's hat down over his eyes and told him you could whip any man in America."

"That's very singular, sir."

"Very. And do you think I'm going to permit you to disgrace my establishment?"

"Admittin' that I was a little off, sir, not wishin' to dispute your word, it was the first time in a year. A man can't stand everything, sir. I have trouble at home. My wife cuts up, sir, and she threatens to get a divorce. Not long ago I let her black my eye, somethin' that very few men could do, sir, and this ought to have satisfied her but it didn't. Yesterday she got drunk and I had to keep her company. I didn't know how else to be a companion with her, sir; and we are told that a man and wife ought to be companions."

"Yes, but I'll send for your wife and get her story."

Jim exhibited alarm. "I'd rather you wouldn't do that, sir. I don't think you'd enjoy a conversation with her. She's very thick of hearing, sir, and it would be hard for you to make her understand what you wanted with her."

"Ah, you don't want her to prove you are a liar."

"Well, isn't that natural, sir?"

Whateley coughed to conceal a smile. "Well, the next time, Jim, down and out you go."

"I thank you, sir. I'll put up with everything for your sake, sir."

Whateley waved him out, and proceeded to cut open the letters piled on his desk, frowning, grunting, sometimes leaning back in his chair to puff at his cigar and to think. After a time he pressed hard on a button as if the time for determined action had come. In an adjoining room there arose not the ringing of a bell, but a loud buzz like a riot call in a hornet's nest. Miss Gwin, subdued stenographer, entered the "torture chamber," bowed timidly, interpreted a two-section grunt to mean "good morning," and in obedience to a

short nod, sat down. The old man cleared his throat, a sound like a blacksmith's rasp on a horse's hoof, cutting into the iron shoe; and Miss Gwin quickened the expression of her sad countenance to prove her readiness to serve an indulgent monster. Whateley dictated:

"To John Wherry, Rockdale, Mo. Do not yield a single point. If the men continue to persist, close down the works. Let it be known that I will set fire to the establishment rather than give in."

"To Hefferon & Majors, Hamilton, Ohio. Your letter is deeply eloquent of distress, and the composition of it must have cost considerable pains, but eloquence in business is a wasted art, so far as I am concerned. Apparently you made no great effort to meet your obligations, seeming to expect an extension of time. But without waste of words let me assure you that you must toe the mark or take the consequences."

He glanced in silence into the contents of letter after letter. Some of the "offerings" he dropped into the wastebasket; others he put aside to be taken up by a lesser hand. Then he took up one, read it, knit his brows, unraveled them and dictated:

"To Witherspoon & Rankin.

"I am somewhat astonished at the verdict for five thousand dollars rendered in favor of Mrs. Nash, for the death of her husband, alleged to have been killed by one of my street cars. I should have thought that as money is somewhat tight, common drunkards would be cheaper this year. Of course you are to appeal the case."

He glanced at Miss Gwin, saw that she was striving against emotion. "Eh, what's the matter?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but Mrs. Nash is my mother, and Mr. Nash, my stepfather, was not a drunkard," she faltered.

The old man frowned. " Why didn't you say something about this before? "

" I was afraid I might be dismissed, sir. My mother depends — "

" Yes, your mother needs the money. But is it my business to supply every needy mother with money? Am I to be a source of universal revenue? "

" I don't know, sir."

" You don't know. I am glad I can credit you with that much information. Our witnesses testified that Nash was drunk."

" I beg your pardon, sir, but witnesses don't always tell the truth."

" No, not unless it is to their interest. That's all."

Miss Gwin arose and looked at him as he was busy with his papers. Whateley shot a glance at her. " That's all."

" Mr. Whateley, if you knew how hard Mr. Nash had to work for a living, I am sure — "

" And can't you be equally sure I said ' That's all '? "

As Miss Gwin turned to go, Jim came in, said that Mrs. Nash — and the old man roared. " What the devil did she want to come here for! Tell her I won't see her."

Jim ducked back into the precincts of his own territory, and in subdued hysteria Miss Gwin went out to mingle distresses with her mother; and the poor old woman in rusty black went away, to shudder in good cause at the harshness of the world. Miss Gwin did not wear the sealskin so soft and furry in the fancy of a country girl practicing prospective stenography with one hand and reaching languidly toward chocolate creams with the other. At different times old Calvin had employed many young shorthanders, and not a few of them, newly

installed, had beamed blue-orbed upon him, but if any of them ever wore polar hide they acquired its price out of necessary economy or through the channels of graces tossed off in some other direction.

With chilled fingers the stepdaughter of the "drunkard who ought to have been cheaper" hailed down upon her keyboard, and the old man, sole audience of his own occasional growl, sat over a big parchment bond which a quickly entering and retiring understrapper had just placed before him. He mused, his mind half on the bond and half on the world in general: "Money, money! Everybody straining after it. Legislators with their hands held out and their paws getting bigger all the time. After a while it will be quite a luxury to own half a dozen of them." His eye caught sight of a sheet of paper that had slipped down from a pile of rubbish at his elbow. "What's this? Lost his leg in a coal mine. Demands that I shall furnish him with another. Loses his own leg and wants to pull mine." He tore the paper and threw it into the waste basket.

Jim came in, ducking his turtle head, and thrust forth a card. Whateley glanced at it. "Reverend Dr. Henshaw. Money. Oh, yes, of course. But I'll just fight it out with him. Show him in. . . . I've paid exorbitant rent for that pew year after year and haven't — slept in it more than once in six months."

In came the reverend gentleman, with close-cropped gray about the gills, rushed forward, overturned a pile of papers and seized Whateley by the hand. "My dear Mr. Whateley, my very, very dear sir, how are you? You are the first one I call on after my return."

"Sit down, Doctor."

He shook Whateley's hand again, with a gleam of gold through the winter meadow about his mouth, and

sat down. "I thank you, sir; I thank you very much. And as I have just remarked, you are the first one I call on after my return, a great pleasure to me, I assure you."

"Have you been out of town, Doctor?"

At times in life we all of us receive almost a vital blow; the overconfident candidate upon receiving news of his impossible defeat is crushed, but the Rev. Dr. Henshaw was mashed out flat, like the trick dummy run over by the street roller, and it was some time before he began to round out again. But Whateley waited for him, stirring among his papers until the victim of the catastrophe found wind to say, "Out of town! Merciful Heaven, man, I have just returned from Europe."

"Oh, is that so? Have a cigar."

"I thank you, sir; I don't smoke. I have never tasted tobacco. Learned from my New England mother to — to hate rum and tobacco."

"Good enough. But my mother smoked by the cabin fire, musing over the good she might do to some distressed neighbor, and somehow I am of the opinion that the Lord never held it up against her very hard."

The doctor rubbed his hands together. "Ah, possibly not."

Whateley smiled. "Well, do you find everything all right upon your return?"

The doctor coughed in a floating cloud of smoke, and shook his head impressively. "Not as I could wish, Mr. Whateley; not wholly as I could wish."

"Well," said the man of millions, "it's human nature, you know, to wish for more than we can get."

Jim handed in a card. Whateley bestowed upon it a quick glance. "Tell Mr. Ames I am not in."

Jim pranced his pleasure. How he loved to turn away the common herd. "But he says, sir, that he will wait till you do come in."

"Tell him I'm out and will remain out permanently. You're stronger than he is. Then see to it."

Jim retired delighted, and Whateley answered the inquiring look of Henshaw's countenance: "A poor devil of an inventor trying to mold a foggy thought in brass. I have given him one interview and that's enough."

"No doubt," said the doctor. "But inventors sometimes have, I might say, unique ideas. I knew one that got up a device for filing and keeping track of sermons, and it was quite ingenious, I assure you. What sort of an invention has this one?"

"Well, that's just about what he's trying to find out himself. Er — did you wish to see me about anything in particular, Doctor?"

Henshaw coughed, once as an experiment, then as the revised and accepted achievement, and shifting his posture to one of more studied and conventional uneasiness, gave his host an appealing eye. "Well, yes, in a way. My dear Mr. Whateley, we — I may say that while in person you are not very active in our — hah — devoted church, yet we, I might say, look upon you fondly as one of the pillars — that is — "

"As one of the bolsters when you need money," Whateley blew in upon him with a puff of smoke.

The doctor blinked, coughed and said: "Well, I wouldn't put it exactly that way — that is, not precisely that way, but for the sake of that brevity wherein lies our wit if not our witticism — may in brief say — yes. Ahem!"

"And at present, Doctor, what peculiar phase of financial distress are you trying to stare out of countenance?"

Henshaw brightened and shifted into an uneasier and therefore more righteous position. "Well, you must know, my dear Mr. Whateley, that as a Christian organization we have a certain honor to maintain; indeed, a sacred obligation. Upon returning from my — er — much needed rest abroad, I find that our people have not been very active in subscribing our share of the means for the proper and respectable maintenance of foreign missions."

This was followed by a sonorous and completely successful "ahem!" and Whateley, with the cold-wave-signal smile that so many men had learned to dread, took up a newspaper. "I see here, Doctor, that one denomination in this country has, this year, raised ten million dollars for foreign missions."

The doctor's smile was one of assumed astonishment turned sick. Experience, the exercise of ethical professionalism, demanded that he should sink back into repose, with hands outspread and fingertips pressed gently together. This was accomplished without a bobble. "Yes, a goodly, a very goodly sum."

"Very," said Whateley. "And in another column I read that in New York fifteen thousand children are compelled to go to school hungry."

"Dear me," exclaimed the doctor, "you astonish me."

"No doubt. Here it is. Read it."

The doctor took the newspaper, followed the direction of Whateley's finger and read the paragraph. Then, to gain time, he pressed his glasses tighter upon his nose

and gave a make-believe of reading more carefully. "Ah, so it appears. Most distressing state of affairs, I should think."

"Very," said Whateley.

"Yes, very," the doctor agreed, sighing as he placed the startling information carefully on the desk. "Fifteen thousand! Dear me. But possibly there *may* be some exaggeration. Let us hope so. Ah, certain it is that the poor we have with us noon and night as well as morning. But, my dear Mr. Whateley, the hunger of this world is as nothing compared with the never-ending anguish of the world to come. The body is temporary; the soul — ahem — is eternal. And as keepers of brothers whom we have never seen, you and I are responsible for the souls of men yet unborn. And believing that your conscience must tell you that this is true, I now ask you, Mr. Whateley, one of the most successful and therefore one of the most responsible of men — I ask you as to what amount I may set down opposite your name for foreign missions."

About the financier's lips the chill smile played, but to the doctor, an estimater of words rather than a reader of countenances, the frosty gleam was a light of encouragement, and in his turn he smiled. . . . And on the window ledge a cold sparrow fluttered.

"Doctor, you may put me down for — "

"I thank you, Mr. Whateley."

"For one penny."

Ah, the smile had been a play of humor; and the doctor laughed. "How fond of a joke you are, Mr. Whateley. You must have inherited it, an atavistic trait from some droll ancestor. But it is well that in the midst of our worries and severer trials we should find a relief, or I might more properly say, assistance if not

a — almost real consolation in the indulgence of humor. And now you will raise that one penny to — er — one thousand dollars? ''

'' One penny; no more. Hitherto, Dr. Henshaw, I have helped to pour money into the bottomless rathole of foreign missions, but I am done. I am willing to risk money on an experiment, but when I find out that it is always to be an experiment, I give it over to people that are fonder of wasting money than I am.''

'' Mr. Whateley, it grieves me to hear you say that.''

'' No doubt. Not long ago I read the statement of an English missionary in which he said that in his opinion there had never been a hundred real conversions in China.''

'' A grave error, sir; a most dangerous error. But does he say that the missionaries have not planted and fostered the growth of our — ahem — trade in heathen lands? ''

'' Oh, shifting it over to a commercial basis, eh? Well, granting that the missionaries are commercial travelers in spiritual disguise, doesn't it strike you that they soldier on the job? Did you wish to see me about anything else, Dr. Henshaw? ''

In the doctor's sigh there was the proper degree of anxiety and distress. '' Why — er — a matter of very small moment. There has been some little talk — I may say that it has been intimated to me that in consideration of my heavy expenses abroad — indeed, some of my friends think that I ought to have more salary. I trust, sir, that you do not object.''

'' Not at all, Doctor. In whatever line it may be, whenever you find an efficient and trustworthy man, pay him. Nearly every man of affairs is looking about for someone whom he can trust, someone who will not

prove assassin to his interests — to find someone who would not for money murder his very soul. And somehow, my judgment of a man comes with the first flash of him. But we are all more or less judges of character until some fatal moment — what is it? ''

Jim presented a card. Whateley read the name. '' 'George Howerson,' I don't know him. What sort of a looking man is he? ''

'' As fine a looking chap as you ever see, sir.''

'' Tell him to write the nature of his business.''

Jim pranced out. Whateley continued. '' Yes, sir, the first flash — intuition, if you will; and it seems to me that right there is where the most of you preachers are lacking. Your faith is developed at the expense of your perception.''

The doctor arose to go. But he needs must linger to speak a few more wise words: '' I have never experienced any difficulty in reading character. It comes to me in a most natural way, inherited, like your sense of humor. But I do wish, Mr. Whateley, that you would take a more hopeful view of foreign missions. I bid you good day.''

Whateley had turned again to an examination of the bond. '' Good day. But when the Lord wants Chinamen and Hottentots, He'll get 'em.''

Henshaw halted at the door, looked back at Whateley, who had not taken his eyes off the bond, sighed professionally, and went out, passing Jim. The '' bouncer '' placed before Whateley a leaf torn from a tab. On it was written: '' I wish to see you about the construction of a new system of waterworks at Glenwich.'' Whateley read the words and leaned back in his chair, musing over them. Jim stood waiting.

'' Tell him to come in.''

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISSION OF THE BULLDOG

So intent was Whateley upon the broad sheet of paper spread out in front of him that he did not look up as Howerson entered. The visitor came forward, seeming to feed upon him with hungry eyes; and near the desk he stood, slowly taking off his gloves, as Whateley looked up.

"Ah, sit down, sir. Pardon me just a moment." He looked down again, leaning forward to read the close writing on the bond.

"Thank you."

Howerson, gazing at him, slowly sat down. The tyrant, the crusher of men, had not said enough, had not revealed himself. The avenger would wait. There was time enough. He would play with him, draw him into an argument, penetrate the inner blackness of his soul. Whateley glanced at him, searched him, then looking down again, muttered to himself. The avenger yearned to hear those secret thoughts, for he knew that they were dark and of evil threat to some poor wretch, the determination to oust some widow from her home; and he was glad that this drinker of misfortune's blood after admitting him had almost ignored his presence, thus giving his own blood a longer time to boil.

"I beg your pardon," said Whateley, putting the bond aside. "Waterworks at Glenwich? Do you come as a representative from that city?"

"No one knows that I have come. But it struck me that they need a new water system."

"Rather vague. Have you examined the ground?"

"Not thoroughly, but it requires only one look to reveal the truth. I have not spoken to anyone in authority. It will require money and influence, exactly where I am short; and I thought perhaps I might interest you. But I confess to you that I have had no experience in this line."

Whateley grunted. Not yet had he spoken the vital word; and the "Agent of Justice," with vengeance in his heart uncooled, wondered at himself and his pliant lying. How delicious a comedy, what a lead-up to tragedy! It was too soothing to give over; he would play it yet a while longer. He hungered for new expressions in those exploring eyes before death should dim them.

"Why did you think that I would be interested?"

"Because there is money in it."

"Good enough. But why should I take up such a proposition with a stranger?"

"Because you are a judge of men."

"Ah, and because I am not likely to take up with a mere dreamer."

"All achievement was once a dream."

Whateley grunted. "And so was all failure. But there might be something in your undigested scheme. I have in a way thought of it myself. I very often motor around in that neighborhood."

And the avenger mused. "The old beast is already planning a robbery." Had the cue been spoken? Whateley looked down, stirring among his papers. Howerson arose, his hand behind him; and at this moment there came a joyous cry:

" Grandpa."

A beautiful boy came running into the room; and the old man dropped everything and sprang up from his chair, with arms held out.

" Why God bless his life," the tyrant cried, catching up the boy with a tight hug. " Grandpa hasn't seen him in an age. No, and everything has been going wrong since you left me, but now everything will go all right. God bless you! " Then he said to Howerson, who had dropped down upon the chair: " This is Calvin Whateley, Junior, my son's boy. But whose boy are you, hah — whose boy? "

" Your boy," cried the little fellow.

The old man, his eyes soft and beaming, hugged him. " Yes, *my* boy, God bless him. And here we are at home again, seated on our throne," and he put the happy child on the desk between himself and Howerson; and the little fellow shook his head, color-caught from the sun, and laughed, and Big Jim stuck his head in and winked at him. Howerson sat dazed, in an emotion too new, too strange for thought, feeling that it would be profane of him to speak. Cold dew gathered on his brow, and he shuddered, and he knew that it was icy murder melting, trickling from his heart.

" Ah," said the old man, stroking the boy's hair, " did you have a good time? "

With a clap of hands little Calvin cried, " You bet."

Old Calvin laughed, and the sparrow that had fluttered cold on the window ledge, now seemed warm in a ray of the sun. " Yes, we'll bet and we'll win. And what did you see over there in those places where grandpa has never had time to go? Hah! What did you see? "

" Oh, a whole lot of things. Big castles where they

used to shut people up to starve to death, and a house made out of glass, and a tower that leaned over, and houses where the Romans used to live, mamma said; and heaps of other things. And in the garden of the hotel I met a boy that couldn't talk like us, and he didn't know how to fight with his fists, and I showed him and he bawled. Wasn't that funny? Oh, yes, and I saw an — an — anarchist, papa said, and they were taking him to jail because he tried to kill a king, and he had a red handkerchief tied around his neck, and he looked bad. Would an anarchist kill you, grandpa?"

"Yes," said the tender old dragon, "if he could sneak up on me." Howerson shivered, the cold dew on his brow, the words of Annie Zondish pulsing in his ears. The old man spoke to him, startled him out of his cold abstraction. "Isn't he a splendid little fellow?"

"Glorious!" cried the man with the pistol in his pocket, and the old money wolf gave him a kindly look, warming the dew on his brow. "I don't wonder that you love him."

"Love him? Worship him! And kind-hearted little deity, he doesn't take advantage of it. He is my own youth brought back, my own boyhood idealized, for I was poor, sir, and early I felt the cold breath of man; and this child is more to me than all the business in the world. Aren't you, Calvin?"

"You bet!" the boy shouted; and they heard Big Jim in the anteroom humming a tune, for a visit from the boy always meant emancipation from the rigor of rule or the hard, cold eye of ill humor.

"And now, Calvin," said the old man, "I have a piece of business for you to transact," and raking among his papers he found a check book and began to write in

it, while the boy looked on, laughing. Then the little fellow gave his full attention to Howerson, his eye glowing with a boy's admiration. "Gee, but I'll bet you are strong — stronger than Big Jim. I'll bet you could play football, couldn't you?"

"I used to play, little man."

"And did your side beat?"

"Not always."

"Here we are," said old Calvin, tearing out a check. "See? Pay to the order of Anderson Baxter, secretary of the Home Mission Society, one thousand dollars. Now sign your name right here, 'Calvin Whateley, Junior.'"

The boy took the check and looked at it. "Have I got this much money, grandpa?" and the old man laughed.

"That much! Why, that's hardly a drop in your bucket."

"But what's it for, grandpa?"

And the delighted old crusher of men cried out, "Oh, he's a sharp and inquiring little capitalist," and he laughed, shaking his shrewd head, a shake that had meant death to many a hope. The boy, with an old look on his face, repeated his question, and seriously the man of business answered him: "It is to be sent down among little boys in the slums, to keep them from becoming anarchists, like the man you saw them taking to jail."

"And does money keep men from being anarchists?"

"Yes, enough of it will — and sometimes make them anarchists of another sort." The old man laughed, and Howerson gazed at him, astonished, as man ever is when he hears an unexpected truth.

Whateley pretending the strain of a heavy weight,

lifted the boy, stood him near the desk and gave him a pen. "Now you are all right. Go ahead." The boy looked at the check, lying in front of him.

"And if all the money that this will get was spread out, it would look green like the sea, wouldn't it? But if I didn't know how to sign my name I couldn't get any of it, and that would make an anarchist out of me." He wrote his name, and then looked at Howerson, the old look gone from his countenance. "Do you like my grandpa?"

"Oh, very much."

"And me too?"

"Yes, I like you ever so much. I think you are great."

"And could you sign your name and get as much money as I can?"

"I'm afraid not, just at present."

"But if you hook up with my grandpa you can."

The old man laughed. "But Calvin you are keeping us from 'hooking up,' as you term it. And now, Mr —" he looked about and found Howerson's card — "And now, Mr. Howerson, you must pardon me for this excursion off into sentiment, for I assure you that this little fellow means more to my heart than all the business in the world. I trust —"

"You can trust Mr. Howerson, can't you, grandpa?"

"Ah," said Whateley, "he has already caught your name. Yes, Calvin, I think I can trust your friend Howerson," and the flint-hearted man of bonds laughed, and the boy, echoing his grandfather's chuckle, bounded over to Howerson's chair.

"Will I be big and strong like you?" he demanded.

"Yes, bigger and stronger."

The boy clapped his hands. "Then we'll go every-

where with grandpa, for he'll be old then, and if anybody tries to hurt him we'll jump on 'em and beat 'em up, and it'll be fun for us because we'll be so strong."

Whateley sat with his eyes half closed, listening like an old hawk, and when no longer he heard the music of the child's voice, he started out of his dreaming and looked about him as if he had been in a slumber. "Calvin, Mr. Howerson and I must now get down to business. Come over here to me." The little fellow obeyed, looking back with an admiring eye upon the strong man; and Howerson gazed at him, strange emotions pulling at his heart; and he heard the seeming of a muffled voice, calling upon him to run away and hide.

Whateley spoke: "Now, Mr. Howerson, I hardly know what to say to you. You come with merely a suggestion, but, after all, that is what inspiration is, a suggestion. A plodder can fill in details. In business a word sometimes opens the door of great possibilities. I remember —"

Jim interrupted him with a card. He looked at it and got up, "Senator Galvin. I must see him at once. Show him in there." He gestured, and as Howerson arose he added quickly, "Oh, no, don't go, Mr. Howerson. I wish to talk over your scheme with you. Little Calvin says I can trust you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Thank Calvin, Mr. Howerson," and the old man hastened from the room.

"Grandpa can walk fast, but I don't think he can run as fast as you can, Mr. Howerson." Little Calvin came over to the visitor's chair. "I'll bet you've got a big muscle, and when the summertime comes and we can play on the grass, you'll show me how you can jump, won't you?"

And the muffled voice cried into the strong man's heart, "Hide yourself, now!" And he got up to rush from the room, but the boy clung to him. "No, you mustn't go till grandpa comes back. Don't you know he told you to stay?" And the muffled voice broke out in soft laughter and breathed warm upon his heart.

"Oh," shouted the boy, "you were just playing like you were going away!" Toeing an imaginary mark on the carpet, he swung his arms and leaped as far as he could; and then to his friend he said: "Now let me see how far you can jump." Howerson began to beg off, but the little fellow stroked him with persuasion in his touch, as high up as he could reach. "Please! Grandpa won't care. Please!" Howerson got up, toed the invisible mark drawn by the boy, and jumped as far as he could, falling back upon his down-spread hands, and the boy shrieked in glee, and Jim, looking in, shook his big muscles with laughter.

"Now you may sit down again," said the happy little tyrant; and Howerson obeyed, his sunny-haired ruler hovering near. "Do you know my Aunt Rose?"

"I'm afraid not. Who is your Aunt Rose?"

"Why, she's just Aunt Rose, papa's sister. And if you don't know her, you don't know why grandpa named her Rose. It was funny. Long time ago, when grandpa was about as big as me, there was an old black woman, blacker'n any black woman now, named Rose; and she loved grandpa because he was poor — and wasn't that funny — and she'd bake ginger cakes for him and pick briars out of his feet when he didn't have any shoes, and a long time afterwards, when the old black woman was buried under the trees where grandpa used to sit and watch her wash in a great big iron kettle — long time, and the doctor brought a girl baby — and I'm

glad I wasn't a girl baby — and grandpa named the girl baby Rose, but she wasn't black, but just as red as she could be, grandpa said; and you ought to see Aunt Rose now. She's a mink."

"A mink! What's a mink?"

"Why, a mink's a peach. She'll be down here after a while. Have you got a pistol?"

Howerson started. "Pistol! What put that into your head, little man?"

"'Cause grandpa's got one; and he keeps it in this drawer right over here."

He ran over, began to pull at a drawer of the desk, and Howerson cried out, "Don't — don't open it, please."

He came back from the desk, laughing. "But you ain't afraid of a pistol, are you?" A question of some anxiety, for he was not willing that his hero should be afraid of anything; and when Howerson assured him that he was not afraid, that once he had slept with a big pistol beneath his pillow, the boy's countenance brightened, and he said in soothing tones: "I knew you wasn't afraid," and then he cried out, "Oh, here's Aunt Rose!"

Howerson, in a broken dam-tide of dramatics, swept himself from his chair and bestowed upon Rose Whateley a "leading man's" bow, and the boy, delighted with the performance, cried out, "Aunt Rose, here's Mr. Howerson," and the "leading man" bowed again and said: "Miss Whateley, I gather from an innocent and most charming introduction — from my little friend," and with a grace which he felt was purely natural but which may have been an art far surpassing his own, she accepted the overflowing cup of his courtesy:

"And I must say that you have a very impertinent

friend, Mr. Howerson." To hear her pronounce the syllables of his name gave music to them, tingled him in meshes of forgetfulness of all missions save the desire to be a gentleman in her sight. "As you doubtless know, father spoils him. Where is father, Calvin?"

"In with a guy."

"A what?"

"A man."

"He is a most gracious little friend I assure you," said Howerson.

"Didn't I tell you she was a mink?" the boy shouted.

Howerson laughed off his theatric embarrassment, and Miss Whateley, picturesque in a confusion not much of which she really felt, looked at him for explanation. "In your absence, Miss Whateley, he has been paying you figurative compliments. From man a compliment may be prompted by self interest, but from a boy it is generally sincere."

It was but natural that the quondam blank verse barnstormer should feel grateful to himself for this speech, and he was, waiting rather victoriously for her reply, which came after a moment of graceful hesitancy: "Yes, unless too early the boy has begun to play the man."

To that his secret answer was, "By Jove, you would have made an actor of me," but he spoke the lines that occasion set down for him: "Your observation is shrewd, Miss Whateley, and, offered as an amendment, I accept it."

"Thank you," and this with a play of eyes, voice and head that pauperized his dramatic resources. "In rare instances modern gallantry on the part of man yields without argument — with a bow, a gracious glimpse of the romantic past."

The actor mused, " She is over-topping me." But he came back with: " But perhaps modern man is as gallant and doubtless as romantic as modern woman will permit him to be."

" Yes," she admitted, " but not so truthful as modern woman might desire."

And the actor was thankful that to him was quickly assigned the line, " Ah, the more truthful the more brutal and therefore the less gallant."

Now he was more than willing to bow himself off the stage into naturalness; and so quick sometimes is gratitude that he was thankful for the ring of little Calvin's voice, before he had caught the meaning of his words: " Why don't you shake hands with her? "

" I shall most gladly, Calvin, if your suggestion meets with Miss Whateley's favor."

Rose offered her hand frankly, and when Howerson felt its warm and generous clasp, all posing was gone, and a man and woman stood looking into each other's eyes. " I am very glad to meet you," she said.

" I thank you. You forgive offenses that you know not of — you are generous. I thank you."

Again Calvin: " I wrote a check for a thousand dollars, and Mr. Howerson is a heap stronger'n me, but he said he couldn't."

" I could write a check," said Howerson, " for a million but —"

And Rose broke in: " Then you are not so different after all from the average man who devotes his life to —"

" But it would not be honored for ten cents."

Her countenance reflected a real interest in him, in such a confession from a man in this atmosphere of commercialism; and she said, " Oh, how romantic."

" Is it? " spoke Howerson with a step back toward the stage of old Colley Cibber. " Then I must be a troubadour, bawling a ballad."

" Grandpa keeps his pistol in one of these drawers, don't he, Aunt Rose? "

" Come away from the desk, Calvin," she commanded him. He obeyed, ran to Howerson, took him by the hand; and at that moment Big Jim bellowed: " The nurse has called for Master Calvin."

" Oh, Gee," the boy protested, pulling at Howerson. " But you'll come to see me some time, won't you? "

Howerson caught him off the floor, in his arms, bowed over his radiant head. " I — I hope to see you again. You — you don't know what you have done for me. We will go fishing together."

As Howerson put him down the little fellow cried out, "You bet! That will be great, won't it? " and running to the door he looked back and shouted, " Ain't she a mink? "

" He is dear, sweet and impudent," said Rose, fair goddess named in commemoration of the blackest of women. " Won't you sit down? " He sat down. Had she said, " Won't you throw a backward somersault? " he would have attempted it. He had come as his own tragedian; she could have made of him her own clown.

He gazed at her as she enthroned herself on her father's chair, as she swept his papers aside, and leaned with her arms on the desk; and he mused, " How easy you are to get acquainted with," and this trite reflection induced the fear that having out-acted him she was now making him stupid. He was not to be obscured by mere sex. He was acquainted with women, the too lean or too fat missionary order who had visited his

father's house; the violet-scented set of the cheap stage; with simpering virtue, with brief dwellers in Hell's red-lighted acre. But now he was eye to eye with worldly grace, innocent shrewdness, unpretentious millions; and he thought of the valkyric maiden who rejected the wooer who could not throw her down; and he mused, "It would take a husky caperer to trip you, my lady."

She spoke: "You astonish me when you acknowledge your —"

"Poverty," he broke in. "But it is true."

"I don't see how that can be. You are so well armed to fight with the world. And success means fight. Do you remember Isopel Berners?"

"Let me think a moment. Oh, a woman with a donkey and a cart, one of old George Borrow's characters. Yes, I recall her."

"Well, she said, 'The world has a white feather in its tail.' And I should think, Mr. Howerson, that you are amply endowed to pluck it out."

"But perhaps I have been a coward too, Miss Whateley. Old Poverty has many cowardly children."

"Very true, but surely you aren't one of them. I happen to know what poverty is."

"Yes, your kindly eyes have seen it in the street."

"Not only that, but from experience."

"Know poverty from experience? Impossible, Miss Whateley. Your father was a millionaire before you were born."

"But I have suffered, in rags."

In astonishment he gazed at her, waited for a smile to make jest of her declaration, but her eyes were sad, as if looking back upon a trouble. "Last night I was clothed in tatters — in a drawing room drama. . . .

Oh, but let me assure you that on my part it was almost desperately serious, and you mustn't laugh, mustn't smile."

"I beg your pardon. I thought you were stringing me on the skein of your art."

"But I'm not. I was playing the part of a ragged and deserted woman; and when I had put on those rags and looked into a mirror at myself, imagination overpowered me and I hated society, despised civilization; and in the bitterness of my humiliated soul I wept, so crushed was my heart; and as soon as the performance was over I hastened to adorn myself in silks and laces, to cure my bitterness. My eyes were opened then to the soul-effect of clothes. I believe that rags would crush the proudest spirit."

Howerson was on his feet. "Yes, clothes, outward evidences of gentility, change us, turn us from our deeply sworn obligations. But true character, justice to the millions of toilers, must triumph over — "

Whateley entered. Rose got out of his chair. Howerson stood, a mute. The young woman spoke. "Little Calvin introduced his friend, Mr. Howerson, and we have been talking about the effect of clothes."

The old man smiled and remarked, "Yes, and learnedly, no doubt. Mr. Howerson, I beg your pardon for having detained you, and now to business. No, you needn't go, Rose. . . . Mr. Howerson, you come without recommendation, but little Calvin says I can trust you, and I will. Go to Glenwich as my representative, and see what can be done. Exercise your own judgment and report progress to me. I am inclined to believe that a prize ought to be waiting for us there. I haven't information enough to discuss details, but these you

can furnish me, and you may call on me for any legitimate expense."

"I thank you, sir, and I hope that I may prove worthy of little Calvin's confidence. . . . Miss Whateley, I shall not forget what you have said."

She offered her hand, and again he felt the warm clasp of life.

With a familiarity that astonished his daughter, the old man put his hand on Howerson's shoulder, walked with him toward the door, telling him that all true recommendations of character were written on the receptive page of the countenance; and the strong man beguiled of his sworn purpose drooped beneath the old man's gentle touch; and into his brain a thought from murdered Duncan burnt its way, "There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face." Then came a thought more burning, for at the threshold of his mind there stood Annie Zondish, with flaming hair and words that came forth like sparks; and he heard his oath and saw death look from her eyes; and behind her he saw the bloody countenances of Henk and Hudsic; and the voice that had laughed warm upon his heart now sneered upon it with freezing breath, and he heard the blizzard words, "Cowardly fool, they are going to cut your throat if you weaken. Die a martyr and not like a dog."

And Rose standing near the desk saw her father pass out with him, and then from the corridor came a loud cry, followed by a pistol shot. She sprang to the desk, snatching open drawer after drawer, caught up a pistol and rushed toward the door.

Whateley entered. "Only an incident in the life of this tragic town," he said. "A poor old down-and-out board of trade man has killed himself."

"Horrible. . . . I thought someone was trying to kill you."

He laughed. "Why, who was going to kill me? Surely not Mr. Howerson."

"No, not Mr. Howerson," she answered him, "for he is such a gentleman."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHILL OF THE BULLDOG

In the midst of the rush of the street, the roaring cascades of impetuous barter, Howerson stood, looking dazedly about him. From his grasp the dreamer's suit case was torn, trampled upon, stumbled over, but catching it up, he sought a doorway and stood there, calling for unity of his scattered mental self.

A newsboy cried at him, and he gave him silver, motioning him away and saying to him: "I thank God you are not the trumpeter of any blood I have shed!"

To a mate the boy flashed his fortune, leaped in ecstasy and cried out: "Dat guy over dare — floppy in de head."

Howerson caught the words, felt them shoot electric through his nerves before he heard them, and to himself he said: "That is true, for like a fool I wait here to be murdered." Thus the actor phase of his mind came back to him, but his attitude was not all actor, for in his sober and undramatic heart he knew that the wretches who called themselves the "Agents of Justice" would seek his life.

His mind flew back to the scenes in Whateley's office, and thrilled him, like an emotional tune almost caught but still in part illusive; he heard the glad shout of the boy, saw the soft and sadly glowing eyes of the woman as she looked when she told of her rags and her poverty, felt the old man's gentle touch upon his shoulder; and then he heard himself, "I swear!" and felt the blight-

ing look of Annie Zondish fall glacial upon his heart. A woman passed out near him, and he started, but she was only a poor creature, with a basket of matches. Ah, across the street in the mouth of the alley — was it not Henk? Yes. Could anyone mistake that sneaking slouch, that footpad droop? No, it was not he; it was a poor devil with pencils for sale.

Back from the many years gone by came again the newspaper headlines shrieking out the final proof of a world-noted tragedy: the finding in a sewer of the body of a man who was charged with having played weakling with his fellows. The time was long, far-reaching into his boyhood, but now he saw the headlines, vivid before his eyes. And then he mused: "But he stayed to be murdered. I can run away — and be a liar and a coward," for again he heard little Calvin's words, "You can trust Mr. Howerson, can't you, grandpa?"

He straightened, his mind cleared and he swore, "By God, you shall not be deceived." With vigor in his stride he joined the throng, going he knew not whither, but going, striving to outrun a vague thought that had shot out from his mind. He caught up with it and it was, "I will go to Glenwich." This thought invited companions, and one of them came in the form of memory, that in the elevator going up two men were talking and one of them had said, "We are badly in need of waterworks at Glenwich." This chance remark had inspired his answer to Whateley's question. "What's your business?" How ardently now he would have grasped the hand of the Glenwich man! His heart rose, and he felt the gladness that youth feels when granted a joyous liberty.

At the corner of an alley a dense crowd was gathering, and pushing his way through, he heard someone

say that a heavy truck had crushed a drunken man to death. He saw the man lying there, halted, gazed; and his heart so high a moment ago now fell like a bird shot in the air; and again he heard the voice that sought to rule him: "You gave him money this morning, commanded him to get drunk and to kill himself." In cold agony he stood, murmuring, "Even yet you are a murderer." An ambulance drew up at the curb and a policeman forced a passageway for the men with a stretcher, but Howerson refused to move. "Who is he?"

"Don't know," the officer answered.

"See if you can find out where he is from." But as the men were lifting the body, memory came with kindly office and Howerson turned away. The young man who had gone with him into the basement restaurant had red hair. He could see it now, the light falling down upon it. The dead man's hair was black.

With another cause for gratitude toward Fate he pursued his way, though not in such haste, for now had come the time for cooler thought, for action groomed with definite purpose. Would it not be wise to inform upon the "Brotherhood" to protect himself against assassination? No, for that would mean his own disgrace. An old man, shrewdly suspicious of the world but who in him had reposed a simple faith, would mock his own stupidity; they would tell a glorious little fellow that his hero was a murderer, life's first shock to his confiding soul. Oh, and the eyes of that woman, so kindly when she bade him good-bye, would read in the red smear of evening print, his oath. No, Fate, now friendly manager of the stage, had changed the cast and he must play his part.

The villains were cowardly and might run away.

But, suppose they should run away, and suppose that by some strange efficiency he were to become useful to Whateley, would he not live in eternal fear that the aim of his first visit to the office might be made known to the old man, to the boy, the young woman? How easy and how natural it would be for Hudsic, at a distance, to write that insane oath and send it to Whateley. "But," he mused, now walking slowly, "can't I prove that his faith was so wisely placed, make myself so useful to him that he would look upon it as a liar's envy? Yes."

Now he approached the bridge which he had crossed the night before, when the young men passed him, singing; and he halted, with a shudder, for what was it now that seemed to freeze him? The weather had changed, and from the south a spring-like breeze was blowing, but what made him shiver as if in a wind from a field of snow? It was that pistol in his pocket, a lump of ice! He touched it, and a horror of the thing seized upon him. He must get rid of it, but caution whispered: "And leave yourself defenseless?" Then cooler reason spoke: "If they intend to kill you it will be in a sneaking, cowardly way, and a dozen pistols could not save you." He stepped upon the bridge, walked close to the railing. The footway was crowded, no one would notice him, and taking the pistol from his pocket, hiding it as well as he could up his sleeve, he hung his arm over the railing and opened his hand, walking rapidly. He heard a splash and hastened on, the breeze from the south warming him.

Not far distant was a railway station, and toward it he hastened, to the lilt of a tune that his lightened heart seemed to beat. He bought a ticket for Glenwich, train to leave within ten minutes. In a forward car he took a

seat, where he could smoke and think; he mused over the long time it had been since he was able to make a railway journey. He felt as one must feel when just let out of a prison in which for many years he has been immured — he *had* been in a prison, in the cell of morbid brooding, but now in his regained liberty he could not make clear to himself the cause of it all. So far as he knew there had not been in his family a victim of insanity. His sister Pauline — she had not been touched upon the brain, touched only with the divine gift of melody; the evils that trailed her, overtook her, were hatched in a Puritanic nest, sat upon by the old blue hen of bigotry. If the gray-bearded fossils and the untempted old maids had let her alone, had not broken the doors of her modesty and filched her fair name, she might not in despair have thrown away her life. "But no more brooding," he mused as the train sped along. "I am a new man, a man with an aim, and I am not going to fail. Father used to preach of the new spiritual birth, and I have received a new psychic baptism."

At the Glenwich station he gave over his suit case to a negro porter who assured him that the "Merchants' Hotel" had changed hands, taking him for a commercial traveler, knowing shrewdly that among the wise men of the road a tavern could have no stronger recommendation than the assurance that it was no longer operated under the former management. The appearance of the town gave promise, at least to a hopeful heart, although the season was depressing, just between the dark age of winter and the renaissance of spring. The snow was gone, and in vacant lots the earth seemed dead, as if never again would it throb with pulsing sap. But farther on in the business district the streets were active.

The dignity of representing great capital came upon him as he stepped into the hotel, with not enough money in his pocket to pay for a week's board. In a low but authoritative tone he spoke to the clerk, and that minion of arrogance toward the unnoteworthy wanderer, bowed graciously, turned the register on its pivot and inked a pen for him. Never had his name appeared as of so much weight as now when with heavy hand he spread it. Surely not when it had acknowledged the parentage of a pamphlet of poems printed by a Chicago "jobber," recalled now with a blush. "Room with a bath?"

A look of astonishment. "Of course." Now he turned to the cigar case where the tow-headed Miss stood with elbows on the glass, ready to shake dice with millionaire gray-jaw or milky youngster whistling the waltz air of the latest blizzard of skirts blown across the stage. She smiled upon Howerson, touched her shapeless swab of hair into a bulge in the opposite direction, and taking him for granted, shoved forward the dice box. He shook with her, beat her, rare victory; and picking out three cigars, he in his turn smiled upon her as again she lifted her mass of conglomerate headgear. But his imagination was at work. He looked at the clock, saw that it was too late for the noontime meal, and asked if there were a good restaurant near.

"Just around the corner. But ain't you going to shake again?"

"No, haven't time."

"Oh, stingy! Ain't you? Just once more."

"All right, just once."

The dice rolled, he lost, paid; and she strove to smile him into further confidence in his luck. "No, some other time. By the way, you've got a fine river running

through this town, but isn't it rather too weedy in summer for drinking purposes?"

"Yes, but we drink it all the same," she answered, her elbows on the show case.

"But isn't there a lake near town?"

"Yes, Sand Lake, ten miles out. Haven't I met you before?"

"Perhaps so. Ever in Paris?"

"Come off; what are you trying to put over me? But somehow I thought we'd met before. Shake again?"

"Yes, some other time. Sand Lake, eh? How do you get there?"

"Trolley. You sell corsets, don't you?"

"No, garters."

"Come off!"

"Yes, sometimes. What time does the car leave for Sand Lake?"

"On the half hour — leaves here and passes there as quick as it can. You can't sell anything there."

"Then there is a car in about ten minutes. Good-bye."

He went out, pleased with his own flippancy, a proof to him that his mind was alert, freed from brooding. He sprang upon the car before it had stopped. A Greek cadence came into his mind, singing back joyously from the past, but after a few moments of indulgence he smothered the golden melody lest it might lead him away, to chase gauze-winged fancies. He was determinedly a representative of the unpoetic present. But from the hilltop of the present he could not restrain his mind's eye from a survey of the flowering orchards and sweet, verdant dingles of the past. He saw the early Yankee youth compelled to invent because war or pov-

erty had placed the European toy beyond his reach; and he felt that imagination, which in the great, sap-flowing age of Elizabeth had given itself to pageants and to jousts, was now forcing itself into commerce. And he mused: "In all ages there have been buyers and sellers, men who clip the coin of trade and shave a profit, but the world owes its expansive progress to the visionist who flashes a light out upon the desert." This reflection set him on keen and thrilling edge, assured him that he must succeed. But how? There came his doubt again, the Satan not only of religion but of all achievement; and on the head he knocked the tempter and saw his flinty horns fly into fragments.

At the call, "Sand Lake," he got off and looked about; surely a desolate place, a landscape of scrub oak. There was no station house, only a short strip of roofing, supposed to shelter travelers from the rain and the snow. A questioned native pointed off farther toward the terminal of Howerson's wild-goose chase and said, "The lake's over there," and now on the native's part silence, but his manner said, "and what the deuce can you expect to git out of that place, you plug-hatted fool!"

The explorer found the lake, a twenty acre sheet of water in a stretch of sand, evidently the bed of an ancient river. Nowhere near it were there any trees nor any evidences of grass or weeds. At one end was an abandoned ice house, sinking into ruin. Realizing that he had been traveling up hill, he reckoned that the lake must lie at least four hundred feet above the town, and he argued that the wind, having uninterrupted sweep, must, by almost constant agitation, keep the water pure.

Then came the thrill of something he had read, he knew not how long ago, that the water remaining "alive" the longest when put into a cask, was water

from the Nile, because its source was sand, without the pollution of vegetable matter, and that next in order came water from the Missouri River, for the same reason taking rank of the Mississippi, as that river near its head flows down through weedy lakes. Thankful for this remembered bit, the adventurer set forth to find the owner of the lake.

He found him in the person of a middle-aged man of rustic though shrewd look, walking up and down in his dooryard. He introduced himself and said that he wished to speak a few words on business. As this promised something to the shrewd rustic he led the way into his home and motioned the visitor to a big chair, bottomed with a sheep's hide, wool side up and much worn.

"Now, Mr. Rice," said Howerson, "I understand that for some time you have been trying to sell the tract of land surrounding and including Sand Lake." He had understood nothing of the sort, and the assertion of it was bold, but might be true, a chance which shrewd business must ever be ready to take.

"I can't say, sir, that I have tried very hard to get rid of it. . . It's a valuable piece of property."

"But the ice plant failed," Howerson offered.

"Yes," said the old chap, "and so would the plan of salvation if it hadn't been managed any better than that ice plant was. Who told you I had tried to sell it?"

"I can't recall his name. I am a stranger in this neighborhood. How deep is the lake?"

"Never found any bottom in the deepest place; and it could be stocked with fish and be one of the finest resorts in the country."

"Yes," said Howerson, "just what I was thinking. Now, I am representing Calvin Whateley and — "

"What! You don't say so?" Mr. Rice suffered him-

self to cry out, looking at Howerson with the wide eye of admiration.

"Yes, and Mr. Whateley could turn that desert into a garden." Mr. Rice blinked. "But you must acknowledge that it is but little better than a desert as it now stands. I don't know that he would want it, there are so many other places offering better advantages . . . Any neighborhood prospers whenever he becomes identified with it, and therefore people everywhere are anxious for him to come. Still, human nature sometimes asserts itself and runs up the price on him. And he quits, right there. You can't blame him for quitting, can you?"

Mr. Rice pondered for a few moments and acknowledged that he could not blame him. A man had the right to dodge when he discovered some fellow trying to gouge him; and Howerson thanked him and said that he was evidently a man of fair dealing. Then he added, "Let me see. What was the price you offered it for — say, fifty acres, including the lake?"

"Well, there's something over sixty acres in the tract that I offered."

"Sixty acres. The land of itself is worthless, of course. It wouldn't sprout a mustard seed. What was your price at the time you offered it for sale?"

"Twenty dollars an acre."

Howerson was astonished. "Why, you'd sell your best land, your whole farm, for that price. Right through here there runs a very poor strip, hardly good for anything." He began to put on his gloves. "I am in somewhat of a hurry and haven't time to discuss it anyhow. The money market is too tight to consider your valuation. Why, we could buy better land and dig a lake for that price."

Old Rice knew that the money market was close; he

had never known it to be in any other condition. "Don't be in a hurry, sir. I admit I offered it for less, but the price of land has gone up since then."

"But the price of water hasn't," Howerson was quick to respond. "Tell you what I'll do: I will agree to give you fifteen dollars an acre, about what you asked for it in the first place. That is, I'll give you an order on Mr. Whateley for two hundred dollars, for a thirty days' option, the money to be forfeited by us in the event that the site, upon more extended consideration, fails to meet approval. The order will be equivalent to Mr. Whateley's check, to be held by you, and in case of our failing to come to specified terms, to be presented, and, consequently honored, the forfeit money paid to you."

So many words caught the old fellow, and caught Howerson, too; and for a time they looked at each other in silence, Howerson feeling that he had won and the old man knowing that there was no possible chance whereby he could lose. "All right, sir, I'll take your offer. We'll go right over to Parker, the notary, and draw up the papers. I'm not up on this way of doing business myself."

Speeding his return to Glenwich, with the option in his pocket, Howerson hummed a tune, his first hymn of achievement. But off the car in the street, and his spirit no longer exhilarated with the sense of swift motion, he began to question himself. In giving the order for two hundred dollars on the vaguest of uncertainties had he not exceeded all implied authority? But confidence returned from its short flight, and he mused, "If I am to question every step I might as well acknowledge myself a catechism and have done with it."

Supper was on at the hotel, and quickened with hunger he lost no time but rather forged ahead of decor-

ous schedule toward the dining room; and "Martha Washington," head waitress, catching at the importance of his manner and the "business" in his look, conducted him to a large square table where sat three commercial travelers, guests of unquestioned honor. This may have been their first assembly, but what cared they for finical custom? Occasion with them made its own rule, and their motto was good fellowship. Howerson dipped into their talk, and felt that he was in the very midst of active affairs. A big blondish fellow with a smile as open as springtime, and a voice as genial as June, spoke to Howerson and inquired his "line."

"I am here as the representative of Calvin Whateley," Howerson answered, with a slight suggestion of his actor air.

"Oh, the Big Jolt, eh?"

"And yours?"

"Oh, I cap the climax of creation."

"You've got me."

"That so? Man is the climax of creation isn't he? Well, I sell hats and caps."

"That's all right," spoke up a slim fellow with a big collar and little neck, "but I am here to dispute your claim. I sell women's hats."

"Foiled!" cried the big fellow. "How's business with you?"

"Rotten. I've seen four customers to-day and haven't done a thing."

Then a sad-looking man, verging upon the "stand-aside" age, joined in. "There's one thing I can't understand — have asked many a man and he couldn't explain. It's this: For instance, you are in the smoking room of a sleeper and in comes a little Jew so offensive in manner that in a minute everybody is sore at him,

and you feel that he couldn't sell you a gold dollar for ten cents. But he goes into your town and beats you all hollow. He can't talk, he has no personality, no address. How does he do it?"

"With spirit," said the big fellow. "He never gets tired. Not for a single moment does he put his employer out of mind, be he Gentile, Turk or Hottentot. And he takes more chances than other men. He convinces himself that he's got the best line in the world, and this means that his customer is already more than half convinced. It may be true that on ordinary subjects he's not a good talker, but on the topic of his goods he's supreme. And with it all he eliminates himself; he cares but little what you think of him as an individual; it's what you think of his goods and his employer."

"Yes, I know all about that," the sad-faced man responded, "and yet I don't understand it. What's your opinion?" He addressed Howerson.

"Well, having had but little chance for observation I don't believe that my opinion would be marked with any value. I believe, however, that our friend here, capper of the world's climax, is right."

The man who had sprung the trap of discussion chewed meditatively. "That is all very well in its way," said he, "but the question that interests me most is, what's to become of us old ducks of the road? As we grow older we prate on the subject of our experience and look on it as the stock in trade of usefulness, and about the time the stock is full, we are commanded to step down and out. It's tough, I'm telling you; and what I want to know is, what can we do about it?"

"We can croak," said the big blond.

"Yes, you can say that now," replied the serious questioner. "You are going up the hill, but I've

passed over the top. It's all right with you now, but wait. And you — " again he addressed Howerson — " you remember what I tell you: They say that experience is wisdom, but I tell you not to put too much faith in it. The blunders of youth are sometimes worth more than the calculations of age."

" Good," cried the blond man. " Another cup of coffee, sister; and say, brother, don't let the old-age business worry you. I see you've got a good mind, and that's a straight flush, I tell you."

Quoth Howerson, and being representative of the Big Jolt, everyone paid heed: " I remember having read of a man past ninety who, when asked as to the most enjoyable years of his life, answered, ' Right now.' Some of the world's great men have thought that life's best age was after the passions had cooled. I don't believe it, but then of course I don't know. No matter how sweet a regret may be, it is after all a regret. Success in a financial way is necessary, it is true, but I believe that if a man reads good books he fortifies his mind against the melancholy of old age. I know that this is an old-fashioned idea, but it has fallen within my observation and I believe that it is true. . . Let me thank you for warning me against too much faith in experience. It encourages me, for I have had very little experience in any useful line, and am therefore rich in virgin ignorance."

The blond man's name was Sam Joyce. Good humor steamed out of his warm nature. Trade to him was a continuous " jolly," and many a country merchant had been made to believe that hard times sneaked away at his approach, that the return of prosperity was bugled by his clamorous laugh. Howerson liked him, walked out into the lobby with him and bought him a cigar.

"Let's sit down over here," said Joyce; and they deposited themselves in two big rocking chairs, monstrous discomforts with broad, flat arms on which, beneath plates of glass, were advertising cards declaring the merits of a local feed and sale stable, the Crystal Laundry and an undertaker's establishment set off with the cut of a hearse drawn by two black horses showing a mettlesome spirit out of character with their melancholy vocation. Joyce fitted the end of his cigar into the golden socket of a rabbit's foot pendant from his watch chain, and with a snap bit off the pasty tip. "That fellow moaning in there at the table," said he, then pausing to light his weed — "he may not know it, but he is doing more than anything else to shove himself up against it; he's making himself old before his time. He has forgotten the great art of youth, that is to jolly himself. Smart enough, yes, and that's his trouble; he's getting on to too much truth. . . . How long do you expect to be here?"

"I don't know. The fact is, I am here under peculiar conditions, as a sort of experiment unto myself. On the stony road I'm a tenderfoot."

"You don't look it, brother."

"I hope not, but I am."

"What's been your business heretofore?"

"Well, to be frank with you, I thought I could act, thought I could write poetry; but the sort of acting I essayed is now a joke throughout the world, and the spirit of Chicago looks on poetry as a crime. You must know that in the Middle West the hero is the bucket-shop man who by shrewd guessing has succeeded to the banker's chair."

Joyce laughed, and a porter wheeling a truck looked back at him with a grin. "I may not know that, brother,

but I know that a man isn't much of a hero anywhere unless he's got the price. But you look like ready money to me, and I don't see why sharp old Cal should employ a failure."

"I don't either. It must be because I staggered him with the audacity of a proposition."

"Yes, but men with staggering propositions are not failures. They are the fellows that capital is straining its eyes trying to find. If it's not asking too much, what was your proposition? You can trust me, and I may be able to help you."

Howerson felt that he could trust him. "To construct waterworks in this town."

"Well, that's all right. Do it. With old Calvin in the background you can pry a nest of aldermen up out of their seats."

"Do you know anything about waterworks?"

"At one time I knew a good deal about distilleries and breweries, but can't say I know very much about waterworks. But if they need new works here, and I know they do, I should think it would be easy enough to get at it. Have you called on the mayor?"

"No, I haven't had time yet. Do you happen to know him?"

The peal of Joyce's laughter rang throughout the lobby. "Know old Bill Rodney! Well I should say so! Classmates at Madison."

"Will you introduce me to him to-morrow?"

And quickly came the answer: "Bet your life."

"I thank you, Mr. Joyce, and I assure you that I don't expect any sort of recommendation, only an introduction."

"That's all right, we'll fix it. But what sort of a

stab are you going to make? Have you formulated estimates as to the cost?"

"Haven't advanced that far. The whole thing is vague, in a way. Mr. Whateley told me to come out and look the ground over, but I want to do more than that; I want to astonish him with — well, with what I might term a mysterious proficiency; and above all, I want to astonish myself."

"Well you *are* rather in the dark," said Joyce. "But Rodney is an illuminator and may turn on the light. That old duck in the dining room said one thing that struck me as rather wise; not to hinge too much on experience. I'm a believer in inspiration. If inspiration didn't play the most important part in the business world, you could train almost any plodder into a millionaire."

They sat for a long time, pleased with the easy intimacy drawing them together. An appointment was made for the following forenoon, and Howerson went up to his room, feeling that he had met a friend. Ah, how different his bed from the slab whereon he had sought repose the night before! And how different was his morrow's aim! But he had ceased to wonder. He lay listening to the town as it yawned itself to sleep.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CABIN

Various affairs were discussed in Whateley's office on the day of Howerson's visit, and it was noted mentally by Big Jim that the old man snapped off a lagging transaction in haste to speed home to the boy. The little fellow met him at the door, and the old man taking him in his arms, carried him, both laughing, up the stairs and into as strange a shrine as was ever built in melancholy reverence for the past.

While workmen were hewing the granite blocks that entered into the construction of Whateley's mansion, there was on its way from North Carolina a log cabin to be incorporated within those ponderous walls, the cabin in which the old Scotch-Irishman had been born. Every stick of timber, bit of flooring, hearthstone, had carefully been numbered, and there it was, the same old room, with its four small windowpanes, the old slab mantel with the same clock, but silent, with a drunken soldier's bullet hole through its vitals.

In one corner was a table that Whateley had seen his father fashion with an axe and a saw; and there by the broad fireplace was the low rocking chair wherein his mother had sat in the evening, year after year, looking into the fire, dreaming of the rest to come, singing softly her sweet hymn of praise. And the old man's chair was there too, made of bent hickory, and the boy's stool whereon he sat, dreaming his dreams, not of rest but of strife. Over to the left of the fireplace and back against

the log wall chinked with yellow clay, was the old bed, and shoved beneath it the trundle-bed wherein the boy had slept, where his dreams of the coming fight with men were prolonged, with his eyes open, watching the shadows as the blaze of the dying fire rose and fell.

This room was called "The Cabin," but it was known to be a sanctuary, whose threshold was never crossed by a servant of the house, except old Paul, who kept the shrine in order. This old man, officially a butler, was a worshiper of the past, not only his own but anybody's, knowing that the present was a mistake. In the earlier days of the board of trade he had made a curbstone cleaning of a few thousand dollars. For a short time he was the richest man in town, but he plunged, lost and went whining to Whateley, who told him that he was only an ordinary fool, which, after a mild protest he accepted as a fact. Whateley asked him what had been his business before taking upon himself the career of a fool, and he answered that in Ireland he had been a butler, but to an Orangeman, as he had inherited the Protestant faith.

"If I give you a job as butler I suppose you'd be too religious to lie for me," Whateley had said, and had received in answer, "Well, sir, that may be your opinion, but I have my own." And since that time he had served in the Whateley home, contented enough with his light work, but always with a sad eye turned back upon the time when in a restaurant he had ordered a meal regardless of the prices set forth on the bill of fare.

In this sacred fane Rose often spent an evening. Her mind could grasp the tender sentiment attaching to those homely things, and she was ever welcome, but for her brother Dan, the lawyer, they held a weak and shallow meaning. His wife Harriet, with her nerves, had

been only once a visitor, and she had said, though not within hearing of the old man, "Oh, what a dreary, depressing place." Her cause to despise it was kin to the cause of Whateley's reverence. She knew that her mother had been born and reared in a log cabin on the banks of the Ohio, that her father had sold catfish caught on a trot-line, humble apprenticeship of one whom fate had designed to smoke sturgeon by the shipload.

Paul had not expected his master at so early an hour, and in the fireplace the logs had not been set ablaze. But as nimbly as age would permit he hastened to discharge this office. "Take your time," said Whateley, sitting down in the hickory rocker with the boy on his knee. "This is a sort of preliminary visit, isn't it, Calvin? Yes, and we'll sit here a little while and then go down to the dining room and see the folks and make a pretense of eating dinner with them, but you and I all by ourselves will cook our dinner here on the fire — dinner, no! Supper! Dinner be blowed for us!"

"Yes," the boy cried out of happy experience, "and we'll broil long strips of bacon on the coals."

"Won't we though!" the old man laughed.

"Uh-huh! And, grandpa, we'll pretend like the soldier has just shot the hole through the clock; and then make like the wind's blowing hard and it's awful cold outside, and I'll go to the door and look out and see the cavalry galloping down the road, to fight somewhere just at daylight, like they did when you was a boy not much bigger'n me — won't we?"

"Yes, Lord bless you. And old Paul must stay outside and watch that one sheep penned up in the stable and shout loud if he sees those fellows from over the creek trying to steal him. Yes, indeed, we'll fix all that."

Old Paul was down on the hearth, blowing the fire,

and he looked up with a nod and a grin. He had played in their drama many a time and had in wage received many a gold piece. He knew that when his master crossed this threshold he was a different man, with no grudge against the men who had tried to crush him. " You can leave that sheep to me," the old fellow said. " And I tell you the bloke that takes him will have to take my skelp at the same time. Mr. Whateley, sir, I was just thinking that I never saw a six-year-old boy that can talk as plain as Master Calvin. It's a marvel, sir," and as old Paul got up he pocketed a piece of money, the reward of flattery, but of truth at the same time, a rare coincidence.

In the dining room Whateley greeted his son and daughter-in-law with his emotions under perfect control, if indeed he felt any. He asked a few questions; Harriet as to the pictures she had seen, and Dan concerning any noted lawyer whom he might have chanced to meet abroad. Harriet had gazed upon the genius-colored walls of the Vatican till her nerves had warned her to beware lest in ecstasy she might expire.

" In that event," said the old man, " I don't think I'd risk looking at them very long."

" Oh, they might not have that effect on you," Harriet cried. " Your nerves are so strong."

" Yes, maybe so. I hear now that art is an improvement on nature, that nature — "

And little Calvin shouted, " Nature's a mutt."

" Just about what they say, Calvin," Whateley laughed. " Rose, my dear, this reminds me that I never heard you say much about the art of Italy."

" It was because I was not capable of judging it, father," she replied. " I love it, as every soul must, but it strikes me dumb. The most of my woman

acquaintances are both art and literary critics, but I am not." Harriet looked up in astonishment. "Why should I be?" Rose continued. "Opportunity doesn't make critics any more than it creates genius."

"Familiarity compares," Harriet observed.

"Very true and very good," said Rose. "But familiarity with a school sometimes breeds contempt for originality. And it seems to me that very few critics in any line are capable of impartial judgment of anything west of them. Paris and London smile at New York art, and the New Yorker, especially if he has come out of the west, knows that nothing good can come out of Chicago."

"Old Chi," shouted the boy.

His mother sighed and looked at the old man. "I wonder where in the world that boy can pick up so much slang. It grieves me nearly to death."

"Father says Old Chi," said the boy.

"Daniel!" Harriet telegraphed to him with her nerves, reading out this dispatch, "I wish you wouldn't bring such expressions home from the state's attorney's office. They are shockingly vulgar."

The lawyer smiled good-humoredly, said that he did not remember to have brought vulgar expressions home; and his wife, having now led herself to the top of accustomed ground, to the crest of her hillock of aesthetic deprecation, uttered her expected complaint: "I don't see why you want to stay in that dreadful place. It is suited to the dignity of only the average politician, and ought to be shunned and shuddered at by a man of your resources. Political aspiration indeed!"

The lawyer spoke: "It's the front steps leading to the governor's office," he said, "and the governor's office is the ante-room of the United States Senate. Look

at some of the richest men in the country; their ambition is to get into the Senate. Mere money doesn't satisfy them."

"And yet," said old Calvin. "Ingalls of Kansas, one of the keenest — one of the great orators of his day — declared not long before his death that if he had his life again before him he would devote it to money. All his eloquence, all his sharp sarcasms had failed."

He turned his eyes not upon Dan but upon Rose, and she spoke her opinion: "His sharp sarcasms couldn't make him happy. . . . I believe Dan'll do something one of these days."

"Good for you, Rose," cried the lawyer, and with more fervor than his wife appeared to deem necessary. "And store this up in summer along with your furs: I am going to astonish the natives after a while."

Old Calvin indulged his scythe-blade smile. "I believe they store furs to keep the moths out. Did you say to put it among the furs, Dan?"

"That's all right, dad," the lawyer replied. "Sis is right and you'll see it. Why, I should think the fact alone that I am not a snob ought to count for something."

Harriet looked at him. "I don't know what you mean by snob unless you allude to persons who have nothing and pretend they have. But there's something worse than snobbery, and it's pretending to be plebeian when you are not."

Rose caught her father's sly wink, and the boy, quiet for so long a time, cried out, "The boy I play with in the alley's named Pete, and we set a dog on a cat but she got away, and I gave Pete my knife and he said, 'Bet your neck you ain't no slob.'"

"Speaking of plebeians," said Whateley, after having chuckled over the boy's recital, "how many of us trace

our lineage back to kings, and if we could, what of it? I was born with a hatred for inherited cast. I believe only in that greatness that a man creates himself, and I have more respect for the man who has distinguished himself as a horse doctor than I feel for the man whose only claim upon the public's regard is that his father was an able judge. We in America and especially here in Chicago know that money can buy the countenance of a king, and no questions asked as to how the money was scraped together."

The lawyer's brow lighted up with an idea, and he said: "I inherited more from you, dad, than merely the prospect of money: the desire to be distinguished on my own hook."

Little Calvin again: "Pete had a brass door knob, and I asked him where he got it and he said he hooked it."

"Out that nurse goes to-morrow," quickly followed his mother.

"I can't blame you for that," Whateley replied to his son. "But it was my hope that with the means I have provided, you might go far beyond me and do such great things that you'd not be known merely as my son, but I as your father."

Rose laughed with good humor's silvery tinkle. "I think he's rather got you, dad; and I say this in his favor, knowing that he believes I'm always trying to work you. Come," she added as they arose from the table, "let us go into the library."

In this great room of heavy refinement, with its books bound dark in leather, the girl's presence was as a spirit lamp, casting a soft light. Great wealth does not read many books, and old Calvin read not many, but he read a few and guessed shrewdly at the meaning of others.

He was fond of Shakespeare, the tragedies because of their magnificent clamor. His daughter read with him, at first merely to keep company with his lonely mind, and then out of pure delight, and where her father found power, she was steeped in imagery.

Old Calvin had no liking for the dainty things of life, and for the most part the furnishings of his home were ponderous. For bric-a-brac not associated with his own hard past he cared nothing; and among the pictures which he suffered the appreciation of his son or daughter to hang upon the walls, there was but one that kindled his eye with admiration, the painting of a ragged boy taking a rabbit out of a trap. It was a crude thing done by some villager who knew his subject better than his art; but ingratiating neighbors "loved" it, and many a financial favor had flowed through the channel of its praise.

The old man was not set against business talk in the library. Only in the Cabin was he freed from the instincts and the language of financial conquest. In the book room he liked to experiment with his mind, and, as it were, to watch it gambol or work, himself a spectator of its moods. To no productive extent did he yield to his creative faculty, except as it might harden into material profit, though sometimes when alone he indulged the thrill-dalliance of pure fancy, like an elephant picking up one straw at a time, he said of himself. Here in the atmosphere of the world's mighty past of letters, he had mused fondly over the growth of his daughter's mind, smiling to think that he had razed out the new and flimsy notions of the school, and accepting as a compliment to himself the reproach of a woman who had fed a king, that Rose thought too much in an old-fashioned way ever to be popular in London society.

Dan and his wife usually kept clear of the library, fearing the old man's cut and slash, but on this occasion, having been so long away from home, they followed Whateley into the room. The boy pounced upon the chairs, hung about his grandfather, urging that it was time to go up to the Cabin. But the old man, who was saving the sanctuary for the "sweet of the night," put him off tenderly. "We'll go pretty soon, now. Things are not quite ready for us yet. The fire's got to burn down just right. You run along up there and sit till I come."

"Yes, and I can play like you've gone to the mill away over on the creek and are late getting back because the bag of corn fell off the horse and you had to wait a long time for somebody to come along the road and help you lift it on again." And he ran away to the theater of perfect art, the play-house that convinced because it was simple and pure.

"So you didn't come in contact with many noted lawyers abroad," said the old man.

"No, not many," the assistant state's attorney answered. "We've got about as able lawyers in this country as they have anywhere, but the courts in England put us to shame. And so do most of their institutions for that matter. Not in Parliament is there a man elected by fraud, while our Senate is the gambling house of statesmanship."

"Good. But I see that a naturalized American has just taken his seat in the British parliament; and do you mean to tell me it wasn't money that put him there? Did you ever know any poor American to enter Parliament through the back door of genius? Rose may answer for you."

" Yes, dad," replied the lawyer, " because she knows how you want it answered. But blaze away, sis."

" Why should I know anything about it? " Rose protested. " I've never known of many geniuses getting into politics anyway."

" Bunk and money," asserted the old man. " In this country if a man has money enough he can buy a senatorship outright. In England the richest naturalized American couldn't, in the market, buy a seat in Parliament, but let him have one of the finest mansions in the kingdom, the best horses and dogs, and he can get there if he wants to."

Harriet was sure that the American in Parliament must be a man of marked ability. He was of an old and therefore a most respectable family. " I don't see why he shouldn't go to Parliament if he wants to. Poor men make poor laws, in my opinion. That's just the reason we have so many inadequate laws in this country; they are made by such irresponsible creatures."

The old man coughed. Upon him his daughter-in-law enforced the Christian duty of constant self-restraint. The cold metal of a sharp thrust at her snobbery flashed in his mind, but he blinded his eye with the scarf of charity and knew her only as the wife of his son, the mother of the boy dreaming by the fire in the cabin; and he arose to go to him, but at that moment old Paul announced Mr. R. Hampton Grule. " Show him in here," said Whateley, telling Dan, Harriet and Rose that they need not go, but they did, Dan and his wife gladly enough but Rose regretfully, feeling that an evening had been spoiled. They knew Grule the banker, knew him socially, as uninteresting an old cash bag as was ever tied with a string. But Whateley knew him

more than socially, knew him well enough to hate him and to enjoy the fact. To the extent of this accommodation old Calvin was grateful to him.

The banker came in with an unctuous smile and Whateley shook hands with him and dropped him into a big leather chair, wondering as to what new grafting scheme he might have up his sleeve. The light glistened on the top of his polished head, and he smiled, his pig eyes gleaming. How glad he was to find Whateley so well and strong, in appearance far short of his actual years — yes; and though time was swift in this hurried life, how pleasant to note at least an occasional man who — who — ahem! And all this time old Calvin was looking for the scheme up his sleeve.

Whateley said that the day had been delightful, thinking of the home-coming of the boy, but he did not express the cause of the day's charm. Old Grule could not have understood. Whateley waited for the shaking of the sleeve.

"Ahem! Mr. Whateley, hasn't it often struck you, sir, that the affairs of our city are very badly managed?"

"Rotten to the core, if that's what you mean," said Whateley.

"Ah, that's exactly what I do mean. And why? Because they are under the control of politicians instead of business men." The banker ahemed echoingly and continued. "From no political party can we expect reform, experience teaches us. Then what should be our aim? A business administration of the city's affairs."

"I see," said Whateley, meaning that he saw the scheme halfway out of Grule's sleeve. The old skin-a-flea wanted to be mayor.

"Just a moment," he continued. "Let us approach the question with all possible care. Let us not in the least be precipitous. Mr. Whateley, you or I could operate our municipal government in — "

"You mean *you* could."

"If you desire to put it that way, yes, I could. Now, you and I, being business men, get at the nib of a thing in a minute. . . Listening to the council of friends, I have about decided to submit — " he paused impressively — "myself to the people as a candidate for mayor, making a short and swift campaign against vice and corruption. And without self-flattery, sir, I think it is to your interest that I should run."

"Yes? "

"I certainly do. As men of means — well, as millionaires, if I may employ the term, you and I have much in common."

"That's true."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Whateley. And you must know that even an honest campaign costs a good deal of money. Ahem — hem! Without any fear that my directness may seem blunt, how much are you willing to contribute toward this end? "

Whateley leaned back in his chair, the eyes of old Grule glowing eagerly as he met them with a steady look. Time is swift, but how long had been the coming of this moment! And now that it was come, Whateley would toy with it. Out of the deck of lagging opportunity he plucked a trump card, a marked card, and at his pleasure he would play it.

"What indorsement have you received, Mr. Grule? "

"Most ample indorsement, Mr. Whateley. I am assured that the Commercial Association will issue a

circular in my behalf. Then the churches will put forth every possible effort — ''

'' In the interest of morality,'' Whateley forestalled, with a smack of the mouth, swallowing a sweet juice.

'' Precisely, Mr. Whateley. Exactly. And the newspapers will — ''

'' Yes, the newspapers! What have you done with them? ''

'' My dear Mr. Whateley, the newspapers are sick of political corruption and will, as I was about to say, join with the Commercial Association and the churches.''

'' Very good. Then you don't expect them to print anything that might reflect on your character as a man.''

'' What! '' Old Grule arose out of his chair. '' What did you say, Mr. Whateley? ''

'' Sit down.''

Grule continued to stand. '' Mr. Whateley, no man dares to speak a word derogatory — ''

'' Won't you sit down? ''

'' Not until you have explained yourself, sir.''

'' Ah, then I will. How much property do you own in the Red Light district? I happen to know of three houses devoted to immoral purposes that belong to you. How about it? '' The long delayed card was played.

'' It is false! '' Grule snarled, taking a step toward the door.

'' Then I have good news for you. The Register's office credits you with those three pieces of property, and you are therefore richer than you thought. Oh, yes, I know they are in your wife's name — cowardice added to moral depravity — but the rent money is paid to you, as I have taken the trouble to find out, and is in no way credited to her account. The ordinary eye would be deceived by the Register's book; the ordinary eye is

not looking for truth. But in this instance mine was not ordinary, and I found it. Ha, you helped to circulate the lie that I had driven my son out to earn a living or starve, didn't you? And how much will I contribute to your campaign? How much? Grule, I'll give you ten thousand dollars to run for mayor."

"Sir, I am in your house," the banker panted. "I should think that common decency — "

"How much common decency have you shown to unfortunate devils that stood in your house? Ten thousand dollars! Are you going to run? Twenty thousand? Your stock's going up. Ha, I see you'll not run. Then walk — and right out the way you came in. Here, Paul, put this old bellwether of scandal out into the road,"

When the big iron gate had clanged at Grule's retreating heels, old Calvin turned with a laugh from the door, laughed his way up the stairs to the door of the Cabin, opened it; and over his cold countenance a warm light crept, and softened was his revengeful heart with love, for in the hickory chair by the log fire the boy sat, asleep.

"Calvin!"

The boy awoke and jumped out of the chair with a glad cry, "Oh, you thought I was asleep but I wasn't. I was just thinking how long it took you to get back from the mill. Did the bag fall off the horse?"

"Did it — well, didn't it!" the old man answered. "Now you take your stool and I'll sit in the big chair. . . . . Now we're fixed. Bag fall off? Came in one of falling into a mud puddle, and I had to wait a long time, I tell you."

The boy was the stage manager, changing the play and characters to please his own fancy; and sometimes

his grandfather was a boy, too, but always a little older than the master of the stage, this to " preserve the unities" as the wise ones would write it down.

" And did you bring the meal home, Calvin? "

" Yes," said the old man, rubbing his hands as if he had just come in out of the cold, " and I poured it into the barrel out there in the smoke house."

Then the boy busied with his silent mind for a few moments, gazing into the fire. " Now, grandpa, let's play that I'm you and you are your father, and just come from hunting."

This pleased old Calvin, for he loved to look upon the boy as himself, away back in the pine woods. " Yes, we'll do that. Yes."

" And are you ready now? " and looking at the old man he saw that he was ready to take the part, his eyes were so soft and glowing and his smile was so full of tender fun; but he waited till the old man had snuffed the tallow candle on the mantelpiece.

" Did you kill anything, daddy? But don't talk loud, for you might wake mother over there in the bed. She sat here and sung a long time, but when she saw you was so late she went to bed, but let me sit up."

" Got the biggest buck you ever saw," said the old man, speaking low; " bigger'n either one of the two that fought till their horns were locked, over in the thicket." The boy shook his head, for he doubted that the buck could be so big as that. " Yes, sure as you live," the hunter assured him. " I heard the hounds over on the hillside, heard old Drummer's loud mouth and old Fifer's sharp cry, and I said to myself, ' There's something big,' and I stepped behind a tree and waited; and pretty soon here he come, thrashing through the underbrush. I didn't wait for him to get close, I tell you;

I brought up my rifle, and I says to her, ' Miss Betsy, now's your time,' and she squealed like a filly. I rushed out, and there about forty yards away was the buck on the ground, with a red spot between his eyes, and the dogs chawin' on him. Well, he was so heavy I had to go and borrow a horse from Judge Brentwood to fetch him home; and to-morrow morning we'll skin him and take one of his hind quarters over to the judge."

And the boy, thrilled by the oft-played play, cried out in smothered voice, with an eye toward the bed in the corner wherein his tired mother of the drama was asleep: " The right hind quarter."

" Yes, and I'll take you with me, and let you see the judge's big pistols that he used to fight duels with."

" Oh, that will be fun! " and over him came a thoughtful change, and he said: "I am still you and you are still the same, but they just came after mother to go to see a sick woman, and we don't have to talk so low."

" Yes," shouted the old man, " and we'll eat. Ah, here's everything ready — and after hunting all day I'm as hungry as a bear. Now we'll just roast these potatoes and broil the meat and bake an ash cake. And how we will eat! "

The boy jumped up to help him with the work. In a pan on the table old Calvin mixed corn meal, pouring in hot water from the teakettle blubbering in a corner of the fireplace, the boy raking out the coals and dropping the potatoes into the hot bed. Then the dough was put to bake, cool ashes on top lest it might burn; and the bacon curled on the red coals, threatening to burn up; but they were too wise to permit that disaster to come upon them, these experienced cooks. The bacon outstripping its neighbors, the bread and potatoes, was soon done, and with a sharp pine stick the old man

speared it off, and putting it on a tin plate he set it near the fire to keep warm.

The potatoes were nearly ready to be taken out, and a jab with the pine stick revealed that the crust on the bread was hardening, when with an air of sudden attention the boy said, "Hush, I think I hear somebody helloing out in the road!"

Dropping everything, the old man hastened to the door and pretended to open it and to thrust forth his head, cried out, "Hello, yourself. Oh, is that you, Biggs? Get down, hitch your horse and come in." Then the imaginary Mr. Biggs crossed the threshold and old Calvin shook hands with him and welcomed him to the fire, knowing that he must be cold. Old Calvin had now a double role, having to play Biggs too, but he was equal to it.

"All well over at your house, Biggs?"

"'Yes, tolerble. Yo' folks well?'

"All well, thank you, Biggs. Mother's gone over to Purdy's — sent for her to-night. Old lady Purdy's down again with pleurisy and it's a question if she pulls through.

"'Mighty sorry to hear it,'" said the sympathetic Biggs. "'She ain't been right well for a long time. What, that ain't yo' son Calvin there, is it? Why, he's growed so I didn't know him — bless me if he ain't 'most as big as his daddy right now.'"

"And I fired off Wilson's shotgun all by myself and it didn't kick me over, either," the boy cried out, and Biggs whistled his astonishment.

"'You don't say so! And I'll lay you'll be out bear huntin' along with us fellers away over in the river bottoms before long. Well, I just stopped in to warm

myself on my way from town and must be gettin' along home to feed the hogs.'

" Won't you stay and eat a bite, Biggs?

" ' No, 'bleeged to you. I eat some herrin's and oysters just before leavin' town, and ain't a bit hongry. Well, good night.' "

And when Biggs was gone the old man said: " Now we'll have our supper."

The table was spread with a cloth taken from a chest of drawers, then from the cupboard came the pewter plates, the horn spoons and the knives, the one with the fawn shank-handle meant for the boy. And they ate their supper, listening to the imaginary wind as it howled about the rafters. The clock told no time but they knew that the hour was late, and when the old man had smoked his cob pipe, dreaming, he saw the boy gown himself in a nightshirt woven of coarse flax.

Then he undressed and donned a shirt of kindred texture, and drew the trundle-bed out from beneath the big bed, the last preparation for the night; and he lay where he could reach out and touch the boy. The tallow candles were out and the fire was low, but the boy kept " character " till he dozed into sleep, and then the old man heard him mutter, " You can trust Mr. Howerson, can't you, grandpa! "

CHAPTER X.

THE SHREWD MAYOR

With premature warmth of an advancing season nature not only entraps the farmer but sometimes she deceives her nearer disciples, the birds; and about the eaves of the house, and with nest straws in their beaks, the sparrows were fluttering when Howerson awoke. His sleep had been dreamless; his mind had died, was buried deep, and now with the bursting of the tomb it arose into new and freshened life. As he dressed himself he sang. Memories came, for without them, the unpleasant with the pleasant, resurrection would be stripped of its greatest joy, contrast with the former state. He sang and down the stairs he whistled his way; and the tune he whistled was caught down below and sent trilling back to him by Sam Joyce. They shook hands, these old friends of a night, chatted and laughed through breakfast and then, smoking in the lobby till Joyce called the hour ripe, they took up their way to the city hall, the traveling man steaming good humor along the street; and as they drew near the place, the "Big Jolt's" agent mused, "I am not going to fail."

Mayor Bill Rodney was a man comparatively young. His schooling at the University of Wisconsin had been good and, coming out, the refinement of learning was shown in his actions with men, and not always to his profit. Old men who had been made rich by holding land that had cost them almost nothing, told him that a collegiate training was a hobble to business, and in

their dealings with him they sought to prove it. But after a while he began to knock his theories on the head, and to study the methods of the experienced, termed the uneducated. Then he found that his education enabled him better to sift and to sort out the motives of his fellow creatures, that he was wiser for having had ideals, though they had served only to mislead him. "It's better to be misled than to stagnate," he argued. He beat the old timers at their own game and afterward they did not like him so well but they admired him the more; and when he came out as a candidate for mayor, they elected him.

Up a flight of stone steps, down a hallway and through a door at the right, brought the visitors into the easily-accessible presence of the democratic boss of the town. At a desk behind a railing he was busy with his morning's mail, having paid no heed to the opening and closing of the door, when Joyce's cheery call broke through his absorption and brought him up out of his chair. "Why hello, Sam, old boy," he cried, springing the brass catch and throwing open the miniature gate of his restricted privacy. "Come in."

Heartily they shook hands, Howerson waiting on the public's side of the railing, but he did not have to wait long, for Joyce reached out and hauled him within the enclosure. "Mayor Rodney, shake hands with my friend George Howerson, who comes to you as the representative of Calvin Whateley."

The mayor said that he was pleased to meet Mr. Howerson and proved it by his manner, money's magic name brightening the eye of welcome. There was an extra chair and the hand of cordiality pressed Howerson down between its accommodating arms, while Joyce looked on in evident pleasure at having brought about so agreeable

a meeting between politics and capital. " I've got a good deal to look after this morning and must trot along, Rod," he said. " Take care of my friend George. So long," and he was out and gone in a moment.

" A fine fellow," said Howerson.

" They don't make 'em any better," the mayor replied, leaning back in his chair so that the light from a window fell strong on his face. Howerson sought to study him, searching for features of encouragement to his scheme, noted his high, thin nose turned slightly to one side, saw that his forehead appeared to gather color as in two prongs it mounted high into the scrub growth of his reddish hair. His mouth appeared quick and decisive, a fancy attributable no doubt to his rapid utterance.

Politeness, and you might say discretion, left them no choice but for a time to " beat about the bush," and this they did, one with the skill of a politician, the other with the take-chance of a novice; till presently they came around to the point which gracefully they had seemed determined to avoid.

" Mr. Rodney, Mr. Whateley believes greatly in the future of Glenwich. Of course it is too near Chicago and too immediately connected by easy transportation ever to develop along ordinary commercial lines, but Mr. Whateley sees in it the development of a great manufacturing center. The frequent recurrence of labor troubles in the larger cities is, more and more, tending to drive big manufacturing concerns into smaller cities. In the opinion of Mr. Whateley, Glenwich could, by showing the proper spirit, distance every possible rival."

The mayor was interested. He leaned forward toward Howerson. " Go on," he said.

" Whenever Mr. Whateley becomes interested in a project, that project, even if hitherto a failure, soon

becomes a success. No one questions his judgment, and his judgment pronounces a flattering opinion of your city."

A clerk came in with a paper and the mayor tossed it over on his desk. " I am too busy to look into it now," he said, and dismissing the intruder, he added: " Proceed, Mr. Howerson."

" Thank you. But Mr. Whateley knows that certain things must be done to attract the manufacturer; certain improvements brought about. Rich coal fields are near at hand, to say nothing of the advantages of your river, but the would-be investor is confronted by the fact that your citizens are not moved by the spirit of advancement, that not until recently did they see fit to elect a wide-awake mayor and a progressive board of aldermen."

The mayor nodded his appreciation of this fact, furnished Howerson by Sam Joyce. " What you say is largely true, Mr. Howerson, but in what manner does Calvin Whateley propose an identification with our city? "

This was a shorter cut than had been expected " In this way, Mr. Rodney. But first let me put this question: What at present is your city's most vital need? What is it that men who have visited Glenwich talk most about when they go away? Your inadequate water system, your poison water drawn from a weedy river, when not more than ten miles distant and high enough to force a stream over a skyscraper in Glenwich is a lake of as pure water as there is on the face of the earth! "

Then, without giving the mayor a chance to say a word, he told of the live water of the Nile, of the Missouri River and then of Sand Lake, whose very name signified purity. The noon bells rang and he took the

risk of " bluffing " for his hat, to go, but the mayor held him. He held something else, vacant feet, front, on quiet streets, and he knew that the city councilmen were in the same fix. It was clear now that the " Big Jolt " wanted to put in a system of waterworks.

" Read the history of nearly every city and you will find it to be a record of short-sightedness," said Howerson. " And especially so with regard to water systems. The city outgrows them, one of the evils of your present system, while the supply at Sand Lake is practically inexhaustible, as you know."

" Yes," said the mayor, " and I know another thing, and that is, as soon as old Rice suspects the city of wanting his lake he will run up the price out of all reason."

Howerson smiled indulgently. He did not tell the mayor that in his pocket he had an option, but he said that Whateley would stand the expense. The mayor arose and Howerson got up, though for a moment he felt more like sinking lower down, his heart having felt the smother of defeat, but relief came quickly.

" Keep your seat, Mr. Howerson. I am not done with you yet." He walked up and down his narrow quarters, went to the window, halted and stood there, looking out. He whistled, and his education may have included music, but his puckered lips were tuneless. He turned toward Howerson. " Well, admitting that what you say is true, what would be the cost of such an enterprise? "

Howerson had not expected to be called so suddenly down to the cost. But he was ready with a venture. " For five hundred thousand dollars we will put in a system that your city cannot outgrow." This was

doubtless true. " It will be a system to excite the envy of neighboring cities. It will be the pride of your citizens, the health, prosperity and blessing of your community."

For a time he was afraid to look at the mayor; he waited, heard no sound and then he looked. The politician was busy with a pencil and notebook.

" You would spend that much for a court house," said Howerson. " Why, many a town not larger and with not half the prospects of Glenwich puts that much into a city hall. You could have a cheaper plant, of course, but Mr. Whateley wouldn't install it."

The mayor put up his notebook, came over and sat down. Howerson waited.

" It's a big expenditure, Mr. Howerson, but I'll be frank to tell you that I am in favor of it."

For a few moments Howerson felt that in his breast he had buttoned up a fluttering bird.

The mayor continued: " It's sudden, but so is everything, for that matter." Then at Howerson he cast a sharp look. " Is Mr. Whateley constructing waterworks in any other cities? "

" So far as I know, this is the only scheme of the sort he has under consideration. Glenwich in this matter is to have no rival."

The mayor thought, and Howerson, afraid of saying too much, was silent. The politician spoke: " If we do this thing at all it will have to be done swiftly. Too much time for consideration in such matters is not likely to be fruitful of a clearer view, but gives slower minds the opportunity to hatch out obstructions. The council will meet to-morrow night. To spring the scheme suddenly as an ordinance would not be wise. Every mem-

ber ought to be seen — convinced. Then the measure, drawn up by the city attorney under our instructions, can in all safety be presented."

This was rapid. Howerson had not hoped for such swiftness; and in the whirl of his emotions his head swam, but he steadied it and said: "I should have to submit the ordinance to Mr. Whateley; but by to-morrow morning we can have it drawn, and I can then run in to the city with it and return in plenty of time."

"But I shall need you here every minute to canvass the aldermen with me. You can phone him the gist of the thing and he can advise you. The fact is, I have very quietly had my mind on this subject, and your proposition is timely. Meet me and the city attorney here this evening at seven."

Out came the politician's hand, and with grateful warmth Howerson clasped it; and in a dream, though a vivid one, he hastened to the hotel to impart his news to Joyce, but was told by the clerk that the drummer had gone out into the country to land a cross-roads customer. Howerson was too active now to find quiet. He couldn't read. The shouting headlines of a newspaper were but a listless whisper. He must act. He called up Whateley, told him briefly what he had done and heard the old man's gasp of astonishment. "Option on the lake and mayor anxious to push the ordinance? Mr. Howerson, you are not a business man; you are a marvel. But I doubt whether they will go to the extent of five hundred thousand. I happen to know the country, and we can put in a fine system with a good margin of profit, to say nothing of interest on the bonds, for three hundred and fifty thousand, but strike them as high as you can, bonds for four years at five percent.

Get two or three options on real estate, from aldermen only. If the ordinance meets with favor I will run out in my car day after to-morrow. And I will send you a check at once, the money to be used as you may deem proper. . . . The last thing little Calvin said last night was that I could trust you. I do."

Instead of having a quieting effect this message made Howerson more active, and out he rushed to look for vacant land owned by aldermen. It was not hard to find. "That lot over there? It belongs to Alderman McCann. Where can you find him? He runs the Holly Saloon, just around the corner." Alderman McCann was sitting at a table with a party of friends. Would he talk business? Sure. Oh, that lot? Very valuable. Vacant because no one wanted to pay the price. What was the price? Well — have a drink? Cigar then. They sat down in a rear room.

"Who wants the property and for what purpose?"

"I am not at liberty to name the purpose," Howerson answered.

"Then you don't want it for yourself."

"No, I am only an agent."

"Whose agent."

"Calvin Whateley's. I don't know to what extent you are interested in Glenwich, but was told that you owned that lot, and — "

"I am very much interested in the city, and more than that, I have faith in its development. That lot is liable to double in price in the next five years."

"I don't doubt it. I'm not asking you what you will take for it five years hence but right now."

"Well, but I must have time to think about it."

"But don't you know the price you've offered it

for? What would you have taken for it yesterday? What was it worth before Mr. Whateley wanted it?"

"Say, come around in an hour from now."

Howerson knew that his failure to get an option would stimulate the spirit of speculation. "Well, I may see you and I may not."

"But give me your word that you won't buy elsewhere till you've seen me again."

Howerson smiled upon him. "Buying other lots in this city will not keep Mr. Whateley from buying yours. But I'll see you again, anyway."

Howerson went forth to look for garbage-gathering lots belonging to other aldermen, and McCann slipped over to see the mayor. The mere suggestion of a coming boom has its electric vibrations, and Whateley's sudden interest in Glenwich spread like a village scandal. Aldermen were seized upon by shrewd panic, and before nightfall real estate had gone up fifty percent. A reporter for the *Call* waylaid the promoter and caught him as he was going in to supper at the hotel. The reporter began to ply him with questions, and Howerson, striving to appear dazed with astonishment, said that he did not see why he should be singled out as the repository of information concerning the town. He was a stranger. Why not call on the old citizen? The reporter smiled, congratulating himself upon his shrewdness to detect this man's trickery. How fortunate to possess both youth and insight!

"But will you please answer one question?"

"Oh, any number of them if I happen to know what to say."

"You will undoubtedly know what you deem it best to say," said youth, didactic from inexperience, "but will you answer in a straightforward way?"

More astonishment on Howerson's part. "I will be as straightforward as possible."

Then came the vital question: "Why has Mr. Whateley so suddenly become interested in the affairs of Glenwich?"

"Ah! Perhaps I can answer that question better when you have told me why Glenwich has become interested in herself so suddenly."

Old age whines and youth may sometimes commiserate itself. "Mr. Howerson, I am a mere boy while you are a great capitalist and —"

Howerson put his hand on the reporter's shoulder. "That's all right, young man. I appreciate your position. I know that the public's curiosity employs you as its agent, and I grant you the right to ask questions, but really I have nothing that I can tell you with any degree of certainty. Mr. Whateley, a far-seeing man, may become actively interested in your town, may invest heavily here, and this you may print as a rumor; but I must request you not to mention my name, but refer to me simply as an agent." He was thinking of the Agents of Justice, of murderous Hudsic and of desperate Annie Zondish. "Will you treat me with that consideration?" With alarm Howerson saw hesitation in the reporter's countenance. "What would you think of a great newspaper disfiguring its columns with the names of all its writers, a signature attached to every paragraph? Well, in that respect Mr. Whateley is like a great newspaper; and it would displease him if you should print my name. In fact he might, if the whim seized upon him, recall me and withdraw his interest from the town."

The reporter promised and Howerson shook hands with him. What an escape! If the Agents — but he banished them out into the barbaric territory of medieval dark-

ness. Capitalist! Ah, a few years ago how Howerson's blood would have sung had the press sought to interview him, the Poet!

"Martha Washington" escorted him to his table, drew out his chair, dusted it with a napkin. "Sister" came forward smilingly to take his order and he asked her if Sam Joyce had returned. He had not, a disappointment that "sister" could not smile away. After supper he trod the minutes beneath his feet, walking up and down the lobby, impatient of the hour of his appointment at the mayor's office.

The mayor received him cordially and presented the city attorney, a young man so serious that old age had broken away from the future to totter back to meet him, to mock him with a wrinkled brow and drooping shoulders. He shook hands with the towering, deep-voiced promoter, his lips drawing tightly apart from gums blued by cold blood. Howerson said that the weather continued to be pleasant, and the city attorney who, having taken a sheet of foolscap out of his pocket, was looking at it, responded with, "How's that?" It is dangerous for a promoter to repeat a trivial observation, and Howerson cleared his throat impressively.

They drew up to the mayor's desk. The attorney moved an inkstand, though it was not in his way, took up a paper weight from whose crystal depths gleamed the National Capitol, turned to Howerson with the "Capitol" in his hand as if he were about to smash his head with it, and remarked:

"You have come with a big proposition, Mr. Howerson."

Howerson nodded. "Mr. Whateley's propositions are generally big."

"Oh, I am not here to criticize it, I assure you. I

am here to draw up a bill, not of complaint but of commendation."

His air of awful responsibility was merely a play to assure the mayor that no mistake had been made in bestowing upon him the appointment of city attorney. No man is too serious or too grim wholly to suppress a play for his own moral advantage; and when the attorney had rung down his little curtain, he pleased Howerson with the zest of his work, the keenness of his suggestions — doubtless himself the owner of a bit of stagnant real estate. The ordinance was soon drawn, Howerson's points engrafted with solemn skill. It was typewritten by a young man who waited in an adjoining room, and with a light heart, a gong beating out the high strokes of hope, Howerson hastened to the hotel. There, waiting for him, was a special delivery from Whateley's office. It was not a letter; it was a check for five thousand dollars. He stood leaning against the counter, gazing at the bit of magic paper, his heart beating hard; and he heard the ring of a little boy's laugh. . . . A hand clapped him on the shoulder and he turned about with a start, to face Sam Joyce.

"Hello, old boy; how did you get along with his city hall nobs?"

"Fine, and I owe you — "

"Cut it. You don't owe me a white chip. Say, come out and eat with me. I'm as hungry as a harvest hand."

"Eat with you? Not if I know it! You'll eat with me and eat everything there is in this town, I'm telling you. Wait."

He turned to the landlord who with caressing air was smoothing out the receipts of the day. "Oh, by the way, Mr. — "

"Watts," Joyce suggested, lower of tone.

"Mr. Watts, a word with you, please."

"All right." He put his money to bed, locked it in its steel dormitory and came over to the counter.

"Mr. Watts," said Howerson, "I have a check that I can't deposit and draw against until morning."

Watts let his jaw drop.

"I don't ask you to cash it, only to let me have a few dollars until the bank opens."

"Ah!" Watts took the check, looked at it, and for a moment appeared to be gazing into a sunrise.

"Whew! Cash it? I should say not! But I'll let you have all the money I've got in the house. So that's old Calvin's signature, eh? I'd like to write out a check and have him sign it. How much do you want tonight?"

"Come on," said Joyce, "you don't need any."

"Wait a moment. Let me have fifty. And you may hold the check."

"Oh, no, not at all necessary, I assure you. I am more than pleased to accommodate you."

He unlocked the steel dormitory, awoke fifty of his precious children and gave them to Howerson.

As they walked out Joyce inquired as to the amount of the check. As quietly as he could Howerson spoke the figure which had been to him so startling, and the traveling salesman said: "You speak of it as only a mild sweetener of a jackpot."

Howerson laughed. "It's the first check for that amount I ever saw, and if a prophet had come out of Holy Writ, beard and all, a few days ago, and told me that I should ever see one of that heft payable to me, I would have said, 'You are a very kind old gentleman, but you'd better get into your chariot of fire and honk

off the face of the earth.' Do you know of a good restaurant?"

"Yes, around here there's a foolish joint, put up and just opened by a fellow that wants to throw away his money."

"Champagne dive?" Howerson laughed.

"Yea, and canvasback ducks refrigerated for the guest that'll never show up."

"But he'll show up to-night, old fellow. You'll eat his duck and drink his wine."

"I'll eat anything that ever wore hide, feathers or shell," said Joyce, "but I look not upon the wine. I haven't taken a drink since the undertakers' parade. But don't let me queer you."

"I'm on the dust cart," Howerson declared. "I've known what it is to wait in the morning chill for a saloon to open, to breathe the sour air and put down a last dime for a choke of hell-broth — but I'm done. When drunkenness is caused by failure, prosperity cures it. What's that? Don't look as if I were ever a failure! Why, Sam, I was rank."

"We've all been that more or less," said Joyce. "Here we are."

"Yes," Howerson assented, "more or less. But I belonged to the *more* class."

They entered a place that flashed with mirrors set in the walls. In the ceiling was a star, formed with electric lights. In a corner plushed and hung with silver tassels the men sat down at a table, inlaid, Chinese fashion, with mother of pearl.

"Oh, it's a howl," said Joyce. "I give it six months. Now look here; I don't want you to blow yourself on my account."

"But, my dear boy, you don't know what you've done for me."

"I haven't done anything but introduced you to a friend of mine. If you put in a water system, why the Lord knows the old burg needs it as badly as a kitten needs milk. But I don't want duck. I want a beefsteak about the size of a doormat."

"All right, you order. I'm not hungry. But don't let the fact that I am under vital obligations to you get out of your mind. I don't know that I can make a success of this thing, but I do know that before coming out here I was as pitiable a failure as rags, whiskey and despair could make of any man. I'm not going to blow the self-depravity horn, but it is the truth."

"Yes?" said Joyce, scanning the bill of fare. "Go ahead, I'm listening," he added, writing his order. But Howerson was silent until the waiter had bowed himself out of the stuffy nook, and then he said: "There must be a God."

Joyce looked at him. "Bet your life there is! But why? Because you are no longer a failure? That argues all right for you, but what is arguing in favor of the thousands that have not been able to jump out of their rags into fine clothes? You've got to have a higher and a more universal reason for your belief."

"I have."

"What is it?"

"A boy."

"Oh, yours?"

"No, God's. And I believe in the Father because I have met the *son*."

"That's all right, I guess," said Joyce, "but it's too spiritual for a hungry man."

From an adjoining room came the trill of a woman's cultivated laughter. Over his shoulder Joyce gestured with a fork. "Some fellow in there with a merry skirt," he said. "Risky business unless it's on the square, and on the square it's tiresome. It's an infernal shame that the keenest joy doesn't come out of the practice of the virtues. Why couldn't the guzzling of champagne have been made a virtue? I want to tell you that Dame Nature is an old Puritan."

"No; more often a wanton," Howerson declared.

Joyce threw back his head, filled his wide mouth with oyster crackers and crunched them. The woman in the near-by room rippled, and through the flimsy wall came the low tones of a man's voice.

"Puritan and wanton by turns," said Joyce, spraying out cracker crumbs. "But having just made the important, not to say dangerous discovery that there is a God, how can you say that Nature is a wanton?" He speared a pickle into his mouth, crunched it, sounding like choppy footsteps in frozen snow.

"Because in everything I do or say I am inconsistent," Howerson answered. "Because, like the majority of men, I speak before I think. But Nature isn't God. Let me say that Nature is the body of God but not the soul. In its waywardness a man's body may do things that his soul, his mind, does not approve. His body shakes with ague. God's body shakes, a physical convulsion, and a city tumbles into ruin. Sap in the rose is the blood of God, not his soul. The soul is behind the sap, has created it. The—"

Joyce broke in: "If you want to succeed in business, cut that out. If you talk like that they'll say you're off. In business they'll sometimes stand for an atheist,

but not for a man who presumes to define God. Ordinarily you must believe in Him, but seek to run Him off with a surveyor's chain and you're nutty."

Joyce laughed, but Howerson replied soberly: "You are right, Sam; I know it, and I shall not only profit materially but spiritually by what you have said. When I awoke this morning I thought that my mind had been completely regenerated, but I find that a certain relaxation tends to turn it back toward confused metaphysical gropings. Gratitude brings up for review the horror from which we may have been rescued, but brooding over the horror becomes weaker as time passes, and I confess to you that I need time."

The waiter brought the meal. With his hands spread out over the steak, Joyce pronounced a physical grace. His eyes glowed. During a long time he said nothing, a healthy animal feeding; and Howerson enjoyed him as one enjoys the food eagerness of a lion. The woman in the adjoining room shouted her laughter, and then came a smothery gurgle and the explosion of an awkward kiss. Joyce put down his knife. "She's got a novice," he said. "Do you know what she's responsible for right now? For the degeneracy of the stage and the disgrace of the novel. Debt-ridden genius lends itself to — to — "

"To the slime that's kin to the sap in her veins," Howerson suggested.

"Nail on the head," Joyce declared. "And the devil of it is that her taste is the taste of millions of women physically pure. But what's the use!"

He resumed his feeding. The woman laughed, hummed a tune, the man talked in a low tone. Into the main dining room separated from the plush corner by looped-back blue stuff, came running young fellows and girls,

the girls with their hats in their hands, having tried to shield them from a sudden mood of the weather. They shook sparkling drops of water from their hair, playfully shrieking, and one of the young fellows pretended to run out from under the shower, as if from beneath a rain-laden tree, shaken by mischief.

"Raining," said Joyce. Then he added: "There are two coal grates in the council chamber, one on each side; and, especially if it's raining, tell Rodney to have a fire in each of them. They'll be eloquent in favor of your bill."

"Sam, you're a psychologist right."

"Watch me," said Joyce. "A man is richest, not down in his gold mine but at his fireside."

"You think in observations, Sam. Some men talk words, but you talk visions. A fellow at a camp fire at night owns a continent. Yes, I'll have the grates lighted. Won't you be here? I'll need your congratulations."

"That's right; congratulation and not condolence, for you're not going to fail, you know. No, I'll not be here; got to pull out on a freight early in the morning. But I may see you in town before long. Here's my card and phone number. Call me up and we'll go out and start something. Shall we hike on back to the kennel?"

Howerson took up the check, folded three-corner-wise to give it an air of "swell" secrecy, and brightened the waiter's countenance with a tip. As they passed out into the large dining room Howerson heard the wit of the inrush of youth remark: "There's the prize fighter and his fat trainer. Look out for 'em," and the girls, quick contributors to the demands of genius, smothered their laughter. How far some of them were from the woman in the side room, and yet, how near! How

short-cut might be their road to unfortified opportunity!

Warm rain pattered softly. On the stone pavement pearls danced in the yellow light. There was no wind, no chill. It was a night when in the motionless air only sweet memories come back, always from happy days — a sunset long ago, the warm, timid pressure of a glorified hand, the valley enchanted, the hill-top templed by the wand of a boy's love, the world of holy ignorance. Joyce must have felt it too, for he took hold of Howerson's arm, and they walked in silence.

In the hotel parlor a coal fire was burning low, and they sat down beside it, still mute; and they heard the soft patter on the thawed earth, grateful, it seemed, for the warm drops.

Joyce spoke: "I want to tell you that I'm wet."

"So am I."

"But it's fine."

"Baptism," said Howerson.

"Look here, George, you've got a theology shine on to-night. But it's all right. Keep it as long as you can, but base it on something deeper than prosperity."

"What little religion I've got, Sam, can't be taken away from me, now. It is based on pure redemption of soul. It is the religion of gratitude, but as I can speak of it only in a vague way, I'll say nothing. There *is* such a thing though as saving a man's soul. Oh, I was a materialist. I didn't believe in anything, got to a point where I wouldn't read a book if it mentioned Christ; but I won't talk about it."

"Go ahead while I'm drying out my baptism."

"No, I am not worthy yet to speak of it. I am too much of a liar. I've lied all day, and enjoyed it, too. I've deceived everybody, and yet it is a part of my redemption. But I'm not going to deceive old Calvin

Whateley, and that is also a part of my redemption. I am going to be the most faithful man he ever dealt with, until the time comes when I shall be forced to make a confession to him, and then you'll see old George with his little kit of tools disappearing over the dim edge of the landscape."

"Confession be blowed! What have you got to confess? Haven't stolen anything from him, have you? I take it for granted you haven't. Going to serve him to the full and untiring trot of your ability? I take that for granted also. And now I don't see any kick coming on his part. Whatever indulgence you may feel inclined to grant yourself, old boy, never permit yourself to get morbid. You'd better get drunk ten to one, for out of a night's drunk there may come a mind-purifying repentance, but nothing but evil can come out of morbidness. . . . Well, George, believe I'll turn in."

They arose and shook hands. "Sam, my friend — that's all."

"That's enough. Take care of yourself."

He went out, whistling, and Howerson sitting down, heard him joking the sleepy night clerk. It was a long time before the promoter went to his room. He sat dreaming, listening to the soft patter of the rain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ORDINANCE

Howerson went early to the city hall but the mayor was waiting for him. They shook hands with interested warmth, one feeling that the value of his real estate, covered with ash heaps and rusty tin cans, had risen during the night, and the other in hopeful gratitude. For a time they talked national politics, a subject on which every villager is supposed to be enlightening; talked of the reformers four-flushing in different sections of the country; of the gradual though pronounced changes in educational methods, arguing that vital errors were the hardest to eradicate, such as the evil of permitting a woman to teach a boy after his twelfth year; of the false morality of Tolstoy. Finally they spoke of waterworks, whereupon both of them became natural. Without further skirmishing they admitted it wise to call at once upon the executive patriots of the city.

Alderman Baldwin was the first, a great quarter of cold storage beef. He listened, coughed, walked up and down with heavy tread, pondering over his duty to the people, sat down, deploring the suddenness of so great a project. He would think about it. In truth, wind of the scheme had blown upon him the night before and his calf-brain mind had arrived at a decision.

Next they called on "Doc" Black, the druggist, tall, thin, awl-eyed. He cracked no knuckles over the proposition. He began to talk about a factory site which just at that time happened to belong to him. Numerous

offers had been refused, on account of his wife, who was much attached to the property, but as he needed capital wherewith to enlarge his business, she had at last consented to part with it, gentle and pliant creature. Howerson would take an option, he said, though Mr. Whateley objected to being the first victim of a " boom " brought about by himself. But contingent upon the enactment of the ordinance he would take over the factory site if the price were within reason.

The mayor was pleased, and out in the street he brought it about that he owned most desirable " locations," which he hoped that the " Big Jolt " would not overlook, whereupon Howerson gave the executive's arm a shrewd squeeze.

Now they went to the saloon of Alderman McCann, and the statesman received them with hearty handgrip and an invitation to drink of his strong waters, both visitors wisely declining. But in a rear room they sat down to burn Cuban tobacco with him. He was pleased, he said, that Howerson had kept faith with him. A man who would not honor his own word was not worth a gentleman's consideration. His own practice of honesty as a policy had rendered his word a gold coin in Glenwich. The mayor knew that. The mayor acknowledged that he did know it, lying without a squint; and Howerson declared himself sure of it. McCann was careful of the people's money, but he was considerate also of their interests. The ordinance was all right. Let's see now, about the lot that Howerson had spoken of the day before. Ah, the price? But it was settled upon, and this reminded the promoter that he must go to the bank and make a deposit, which he did, both mayor and alderman bearing him company.

By three o'clock in the afternoon the councilmen, all

of them, had been "fixed," not so much by direct promise as by suggestion. Several options were put up, the mayor, McCann and the druggist among the beneficiaries. And now Howerson was thankful to be alone in his room at the hotel. He shook himself, wrote a check for fifty dollars, summoned a bell boy and sent it down to the landlord. Up he came, solicitously inquiring if he could make his distinguished guest more comfortable, and learning to his disappointment that he could not, scraped himself out of the room.

The air was warm, the sky overcast, and now rain began to fall. Yes, the two grates in the council chamber must be lighted. The mayor had said that it would be well for the promoter to make a speech to the patriots assembled, and now he set his hand to the writing of it, but his mind did not respond, and tearing the paper, he walked the floor.

"Why should they expect a speech?" he said. "Haven't they got sense enough to know their own interest? But if they call on me I've got to speak, and if I fail in my talk, I'm done for. I wish old Sam were here. One word from him would start me off in the right direction. That mayor ought to have had better sense, and what was I thinking of to allow myself to be trapped? A little whiskey would set me off, a drink of brandy. Champagne would sparkle me. I could write a speech that would bead and bubble them into my own humor."

He walked up and down. Suddenly he faced about toward the light. "And now, after your escape, your soul's redemption, are you going to hold converse with certain failure, your old enemy?"

The bell boy appeared. Wine had rung for him and Howerson did not know it. "Ah, bring me — a pitcher of water, please." And then as he turned again to walk

the floor, he mused: "No false morality here, old George. It is the assertion of the spirit of self preservation."

He sat down and waited. The boy came, the poet drank of the water and turned again to his work; and now he thought to write a statement naked of adornment, but it was too much stripped. He went out of the house, into the rain, where the brown river laughed in the open and shrieked beneath the stored ice; he went out into the fields where thawed furrow sank soft beneath his feet; and he came back, thankful to God that he had not yielded to another god, the god of the heathen vine. Still he could think of nothing to say. On all other subjects how like a plant-bed was his mind, sprouting the seeds of ideas! How he could have talked on art, literature, anything but the one vital subject. He went in to supper still grateful for his victory over wine but despondent over his oratorical defeat.

The time came and he sat near the mayor, looking down into the mastered countenances of those hard business men, and he hoped that they might not call on him, but they did, and he arose with a feeling that he was to deliver the funeral ode of his scheme. At first he fumbled about for words, tossing one here, one there; but after a time he forgot his fumbling, began to give way to the mysterious suggestions of inspiration, and then he astonished himself. Winged figures of speech flew into his mind, like wild pigeons; and then came homely things like barnyard fowls, flopping their short wings. He sat down, feeling warm ooze on his brow. Something gripped his arm, the mayor's hand, and a voice whispered, "That settles it; the thing's done." And it was done. All rules were suspended, and the ordinance became a law.

The mayor walked with Howerson to the hotel, and the orator of the evening heard him talking, but did not know what he said. They were now at the threshold of the hostelry, and the mayor's hand was resting on the orator's shoulder. "Mr. Howerson, you have made our town!" The orator deplored the fact that he was not deserving of such praise, set forth in emotional words and impressed with a tight handgrip, but with more of truth he could have said, "I don't know how far I've gone toward the making of your town, but I think I've gone quite a jaunt toward the making of myself."

It was too late to call Whateley by telephone, but a night letter of fifty words was sent by telegraph.

On the morrow the town jumped out of its dream feeling that something had happened. An old-timer whose boast was that he had shaken hands with Lincoln, declaimed that the council had taken the law into its own hands; but a retired judge with lettuce and radishes in a basket, and whose endeared homestead had during ten years squatted on the market, appeased him with the assertion that the people were the law and that it was not the province of statutes to chloroform the nostrils of the body politic.

The new life of the town hammered Howerson awake, waited till he dressed, and gripping his hand, offered him property that blindness had neglected but which now was cheap at any price. The landlord overwhelmed him with the obsequious palaver known to the trade as courtesy. The cigar girl illumined him with a smile as he tipped his silk hat to her, and "Martha Washington" swept him a dance-house grace. The reporter was waiting for him, and invited by kindly gesture, slid into a seat at the table.

" Have you read my write-up of your achievement? "

" Yes, and I thank you very much." He had not, but it was well to begin the day with a soft and flattering falsehood.

" And I suppose you noticed that I didn't mention your name. Did you like the get-up of the story? "

" Oh, yes, it was well put together. Why don't you get a job on a city paper? "

" That's what I wanted to talk to you about. You know a fellow hasn't much to hope for on a newspaper in a town of this size — " Had he been wiser to an unfortunate truth, Howerson could have added, " Nor in a town of any size," but unacquainted with the truth he merely nodded and waited for the young man to proceed. " And I was thinking that you might help me to get a job in the city. I suppose you know a good many of the leading newspaper men."

" Well, no, not personally. You see, business and literature — I mean journalism — don't trot together. Business, you know, is very — busy. But Mr. Whateley may be able to do something for you."

The youth's countenance reddened with hope. " I'm sure a word from him would mean a great deal, and if you'd be kind enough to call his attention to my article, I'd deem it a favor."

" Helloa, here. I'm getting into it," Howerson mused; then as an inspirational shift he said: " But as this city is now bound to go forward, why not remain here, and make it your ambition to own a paper yourself? I don't know a town that can offer more advantages than Glenwich. Ambition is all right, you know; fine thing, but the great majority of men in a city have a boss, while — er — developed ability ought to be its own proprietor."

The youth, his eyes on the cloth, was turning the salt

cellar round and round. Thirsting for the Golden Goblet of encouragement, he had been offered the same old cracked cup of advice. " I'm afraid I don't understand business well enough to build up an establishment," he said. " The truth is, my tastes are literary."

" Merciful Lord," thought Howerson.

" In fact, poetic."

No alasful deprecation was strong enough, and Howerson looked at him in pity as round and round he turned the salt, a substance which his muse might never enable him to earn.

" What's your name, young man? "

" Harvey Bruce."

" And when I first met you I thought you shrewd, of the world. Is it possible that there is a poetic skeleton in every closet? "

With a start the young man looked at him. " No offense, Bruce. I spoke from a disappointed heart. I know you now, and I'll help you in any way I can, which may not be much, but you are free to command me. If you are tainted, though, with a love for the oldest of the fine arts, the gods weep for you and the satyrs laugh."

The youth mumbled that it was a melancholy view to take " of a soul's ambition," and then blurted out, his face red, his eyes expressive of defiant appeal from the world's unjust decision: " Poetry is not dead. It sings on Olympus! "

" No," said Howerson, " poetry is not dead, but the poets are, or will be as soon as Commercialism attains its complete ambition."

The reporter arose to take his leave, but lingered to cast once more his line into dark waters, to hook per-

chance a hope game enough to strike. " But if poetry is dead, prose must die too."

" Luminous, soul-lifting prose, yes," Howerson replied. " The future will demand that its literature shall be written with the stub pencil tied with a string to the telegrapher's counter. ' Eleven words? ' cries the publisher. ' Your narrative is too long.' Of course, once in a long while the smoldering genius of an exploring age will blaze for a moment and the pale critics will sneer; but the money-blinded public will not see the blaze at all."

The youth cast his line once more. " Every age has seen the death of art, but art lives on and never dies."

Coming from the average of men who champion the trickeries played upon truth in the name of art, this speech would have seemed mechanic, but this boy souled his words with such feeling that Howerson arose and grasped his hand. " Bruce you have a secret that you must hide from even your friends."

" A secret, Mr. Howerson? "

" Yes, your emotions. Shut them up, or you may see them tossed on the horns of a steer." Then he smiled, not at the boy but in pitying memory of a pink ribbon that once had bundled his own muse.

When the young man was gone, the " sage " sat down to his egg and butter; and then he went out into the street, knowing that the citizens whom he met would more esteem the establishment of a glue factory in the midst of them than the setting up of the furnace from which might come forth the peach-blow vase in rediscovery of all its erubescent beauty. For a time he walked about, shaking an occasional hand, waiting for the bank to open; and when this expected but always

great event took place, he bought a draft for one hundred and fifty dollars payable to Professor Hudsic; and returning to the hotel he wrote thus to that dangerous educator:

"The constant and I may say persistent failure of the newspapers to blaze forth a certain intention known to you, has, no doubt, convinced you that the event has not occurred. Permit me, therefore, to recall my foolish oath and to return herewith not only the amount advanced to me, but fifty dollars additional, the one hundred to be handed over to Miss Zondish, and the fifty to be apportioned among the members of the Executive Committee for sanitary purposes. Tell them to buy clean shirts, and take a better view of society. To save any of you the expense of a visit, let me assure you that I leave this place at once for parts that need not concern the Agents."

He smiled as he enclosed the letter and the draft, feeling that the principal and the heavy interest ought to appease the "brothers," and yet with a second and more prophetic eye, catching a glimpse of the wrath sure to break forth. Then he ceased to smile.

But what was this fresh excitement in the town? Around a corner, into Main Street swept a great red car, a chariot with blazing brass, with a goggled chauffeur who looked as if he would have found delight in running into a circus parade and knocking down the elephant. With echoing honk and shudder that shook the air, the mighty engine stopped at the portals of the hotel. Old Calvin Whateley had arrived.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HIDE OF THE WOLF

With the old man came little Calvin. When he saw Howerson he held out his arms toward him. Howerson helped him to the ground. Whateley got out, shook hands with his agent, gave him a look, a slight smile. Together they went into the hotel, the boy walking between them. Whateley spoke: "I wanted a word with you concerning the mayor, the manner of man. Your night letter made the situation clear. Mr. Howerson, I must say, sir, that you are possessed of shrewd methods."

"The time was ripe, Mr. Whateley."

"Ah, but it takes shrewdness to discover the ripe hour. Tell me about the mayor."

So vivid was the renegade poet's sketch, so quick in simple stroke, with ambushed word springing out to surprise a weakness, dodging back upon encountering a strength, that old Calvin blinked his enjoyment of an art which to him was not an accomplishment but insight; and Howerson mused, "How the devil did I do that!" Then humorously he deplored that he had lied outrageously to oil the axle of his scheme, had induced them to believe that a manufacturing boom for small cities must come out of labor troubles in great civic centers; and old Calvin assured him that in this he had but uttered a truth.

"Only yesterday," said the capitalist, "I received a letter from a barbed wire manufacturer in Pennsyl-

vania telling me that he was going to move his plant and requesting me to recommend a location. Under the circumstances I'll recommend Glenwich and will sell him the land for his mill. Let us go over to the mayor's office."

Routine and prosaic man, unconcerned or rude in the presence of modest greatness, treads on his own feet to get full view of a money giant; and Whateley's walk to the City Hall was a triumphal march. The mayor caught breeze of his approach and came hastily down the stone steps to meet him on the sidewalk. The visitor was conducted into a curtained apartment that looked like a stage setting for "The Magic Flute," and was urged to sit in a sort of a high priest's chair in which he appeared so uncomfortable that the boy, dancing on the floor, cried out, "Looks like they are going to pull your tooth, grandpa!" and the laugh thus raised so changed the atmosphere that every one seemed more human. And old Calvin laughed with the others, in thorough understanding with himself that though teeth might possibly be drawn, the jaw of his interest was not to ache.

Soon the chamber was well filled with aldermen and other citizens equally as ready to sacrifice themselves for the good of the community; and money's politician, the "Big Jolt," wreathed each one of them. He did not speak many words, but each word was a wedge riving timber for building in the future.

Every detail of every business has its throbbing artery, and fabulous-handed, Whateley's fingers seemed to press upon every pulse. Every question was vital. There was not the waste of a syllable, and looking on, raptly listening, Howerson mused, "Despair of to-day's poetry, unskilled of that stabbing diction." He recalled vaguely

an Emerson observation, two professors splitting polemic hairs, stammering to find the right word, while two blacksmiths talking about their work, phrased without a waver their direct meaning.

Option givers were summoned. Old Rice of Sand Lake was called by wire. Whateley broke off suddenly and said to Howerson, " Show little Calvin the town." It was like " put up your books " in a country school. The imaginative, the explorative part of the work over with, the truant poet had begun to weary of the job, and like a playful dog eager to be free, he felt the collar slip from his neck and heard the chain fall upon the floor. Down the stone steps he trotted, laughing with the boy, holding his hand. Ah, and how warm was this little paw of genuine friendship! How true the heart that warmed it! And now the poet heard an expression directer than the blacksmith's word, a shout of gladness; and he felt the thrill of a spirit juice, sweet from Nature's sapling.

" My mamma cries a good deal," said the boy as they walked along; " and my papa says he'll be blamed if he knows what she's crying about, and he goes to the window, and looks out and whistles; but you bet my grandpa don't cry, only sometimes his eyes get wet when him and me sit by the fire and he looks too long at the blaze without saying anything. But that would make anybody's eyes water, wouldn't it, Mr. Howerson? "

" Yes, even a little boy's eyes."

" You bet. But it would make a girl's eyes water quicker'n a boy's though, wouldn't it? Girls cry when you pull their hair. But I wouldn't pull a girl's hair. I tried to pull a boy's hair because he was mean to me. It was so short I couldn't get hold of it, but I made

him howl when I pasted him on the jaw. But why are we going up into this place? ''

'' It's a bank and I'm going to take all my money out.''

'' And are you going to sign a check for it like I did the day you came in grandpa's office? ''

'' Yes, pretty much the same.''

'' But you couldn't sign your check for much money then. And don't you know I said if you hooked up with grandpa you could? ''

'' Yes, I remember, and I hooked up with him.''

The boy watched him as he drew the check, but was not much interested in the money; his attention was caught by an adding machine which he had climbed up to gaze at; and when questioned, he said it was a funny thing all right enough, but that he would rather have a Gatling gun like the one they shot off so fast in the vaudeville show.

They went out of the bank, Howerson telling the boy about guns, and a dog he once owned, a creature so full of sport that he would caper in delight when the squirrel rifle was taken down from the wall.

'' If I had a dog like that I'd love him, and I'd sneak him into my bed at night, like I done once with a dog the toughs were throwing stones at,'' little Calvin cried. '' I got him into a closet, and he shook there in the dark and licked my hand, he was so scared. I brought him something to eat on a silver plate Aunt Rose give me Christmas, and in the night I sneaked him into my bed — and in the morning me and the dog got spanked. My mamma don't like dogs much — regular dog dogs, she don't, but once she had an old pug dog that would wink when you said anything to him and then go to sleep. I didn't like him because he never

was glad about anything. I like for everything to be glad, don't you, Mr. Howerson?"

"Yes, birds and dogs and boys; and the buds are glad to come out, and flowers to bloom, and I believe that God is glad when we are."

They came abreast of a shop in whose show windows were hung up overcoats made of the skins of animals, and Howerson said, "Let's go into this place a moment." He had caught sight of a wolf-hide coat that he fancied would fit the boy. The dealer brought it out and Calvin tried it on, trembling with delight, and a fear seized him lest it might not be deemed a fit; but it was, and he went out, wearing it, almost buoyed off the ground in his happiness.

"Most too warm for that coat to-day though, Calvin."

"Oh, no; it's getting awful cold, Mr. Howerson. I believe it's going to snow. Just look how the wind blows! Gee! And did a wolf gallop around with this skin on?"

"You bet he did, in the dark night; and he sat on the hilltop in the timber and howled when the moon came up."

"And if I had come along there he'd jumped on me, wouldn't he?"

"He would that."

"Then I'm glad I've got his skin. Woo, it's fine, and — won't you let me put my arms around your neck like grandpa does?"

With a gulp in his throat this big tenderness so lately a vagabond lifted the little fellow from the ground, and about his neck he felt the wolfskin, tight; and there in the street he could have sung a hymn, the words he had spoken to Sam Joyce, "I believe there is a Father because I have met the *son*."

They wandered about till the noon bells were striking,

and then they returned to the city hall. When old Calvin saw the boy clothed in the garment of a wolf, he laughed loud, as few people had ever heard him laugh. Taking Calvin in his arms, he said to Howerson. "We thank you, don't we, Calvin? And now, Mr. Howerson, let us go to the hotel, get a bite to eat and then to town. You go in with me. Everything that can be done here for the present, has been done. Mr. Mayor, I shall expect to see you within a few days, sir."

"At your convenience, of course, Mr. Whateley," the mayor replied, turning with his visitors toward the door. "About how soon shall be we expect them to begin work on that barbed wire factory?"

"I can't say exactly when, but very soon, I am convinced. Well, good day."

After the arrival of Whateley, Howerson could not remain great in the eye of the mayor, but though in his parting handshake there was not much of reverence, there was considerable of fervor. He came down to the bottom of the steps, doubtless in the hope that passing citizens might see Whateley turn and wave him a farewell, but the brisk old man did not look back.

"He calls you a great orator," Whateley said to Howerson. "Said you made a wonderful speech."

"I think, sir, that he heard the tongue of his own interest," Howerson replied, and the old man chuckled shrewdly.

At the edge of the sidewalk slept the great red monster, waiting to rush the old man to town. Little Calvin, in his wolf-hide, was joyous to sit between his grandfather and his friend. It was Howerson alone who waved good-bye to a town not destined to become one of the world's great cities but ever to hold place as the metropolis of his heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER MISSION

Toward the city the panting dragon tore its exultant way, bellowing on the hilltops. Whateley's photographic eye turned its lens slowly upon the whirling scene, taking motion pictures of it all, and Howerson's mind made this remark unto itself: "That marvelous gray orb will hold a darker shadow one of these days, when I make a confession — and the time must come."

The boy was singing his happiness, waving at somber men, tired women and eager children who stood watching the great machine pass by.

The old man spoke: "Mr. Howerson, we'll have to figure up how much is due you out of this transaction. We'll do that at the office."

"After paying our options I have something like four thousand left out of the five thousand you sent me, Mr. Whateley."

"Yes, but there is considerably more than that due you. We'll figure it out."

"No, sir, I am already overpaid. The fact is, I haven't done much of anything. You must settle with me as you would with any ordinary agent. It was your name, sir — your name and a little luck on my part that did it all."

The old man laughed and the boy shouted. "Ability makes luck," Whateley said. Then after a time he added: "But there *is* such a thing as luck. We pride ourselves on our judgment, but the better part of fore-

sight is luck. If you ask me what luck is, I must answer that I don't know. But we all acknowledge chance. Why, sir, I have known men to become rich for lack of opportunity. Unable at a certain time to sell, men have been forced to hold on to property that afterward made them wealthy. No, Mr. Howerson, it was your own ability, which you were lucky to possess, that got the scheme through, and I congratulate you. What do you intend to do now? "

" I am with you, sir."

" And with me, too," shouted the boy.

" I am pleased to hear you say that, Mr. Howerson," said Whateley. " I need you and I'm sure we can come to terms."

" The terms are your own," Howerson replied. " But you must know that I am a man of no experience in business. You may ask me why I have lived so long without a definite aim, and I could answer that my aim was unsteady and that I shot wide of the mark. I mistook a mediocre cleverness in marshaling words for an ability to write poetry, but I lacked a certain strategy and I failed. But a man with not quite the imagination for romance may be useful in certain business schemes, and as such I offer myself, with this understanding: that for a year I am to receive no stated salary. But after a year of service you are to pay me what you consider me worth. Is this a fair proposition? "

Whateley put his hand on Howerson's shoulder. " More than fair. I have trusted you, and now you may trust me. At times you may find me hard to get along with, but — "

" No you won't," little Calvin cried out, snuggling close to his friend.

" But bear with me," the old man continued. " and

you'll find me disposed to make everything right. There is one thing I demand and I believe you possess it: absolute honesty. They may tell you that I have outwitted men for my own advantage, and I have; that was business. But no one can tell you truthfully that I have ever failed to keep my word. And now as to a piece of immediate business: I have the offer of a sugar plantation in Louisiana. It is an extensive estate, and having just come through a long period of litigation, is, I suppose, considerably run down. I want you to see it and report on it, to determine whether in your judgment it is worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"I am more than willing to go, but my judgment may not be worth anything. I have never seen a sugar plantation."

"But in a roundabout way you can find out what adjoining plantations are worth, and from such information form your own estimate. I am led to believe that for cash they are willing to part with it at a sacrifice. We'll enter into it more in detail at the office. Come home with me to dinner to-night."

Howerson answered that he should be pleased to, and the boy clutched his arm and cried out that it would be fun. After this business talk Whateley was silent. With his coat collar turned up about his ears, he faced grimly the wind now blowing hard from Lake Michigan.

In the workshop is a fitter place to study character than in an automobile, but Howerson, making the most of every opportunity to get at the soul of the man with whose interest he was to be indefinitely linked, sought to probe into his silence without disturbing it. Imagination weaves its own story into the strains of music, divergent from the romance intended by the composer,

and in speculative mood ourselves, we may invest the mind of a silent companion with a world of conjecture. "The Agents of Justice said you went about in a closed automobile," Howerson mused. "They called you a coward, but here you are in the open where anybody could take a shot at you. That eye of yours, what a study! And yet it was deceived, as the world is, by the sham of clothes — you could not see murder in a heart behind a white shirt. Ah, but perhaps it was I who thought I could see murder in that heart and did not. His eye may have been truer to him than my insane heart was to its tragic purpose."

When the car halted at the curb in front of Whateley's office, little Calvin made a motion to get out. "No, my son," said the old man, "you must go on home." The boy rebelled. "Yes, you must, and show your mother your coat."

The boy yielded, but hung upon a stipulation. "And will Mr. Howerson come with you sure?" Howerson assured him, and sitting back, he turned up the collar of his coat, after the manner of the old man, and sped toward home. For a time Whateley looked after him and then turned toward the scene of his sharp transactions wherein his hired talent labored at its task, dreading to see him enter.

"By the way," said Howerson, as they reached the elevator, "if you don't wish to enter at once upon the details of my trip South, I have some matters that I should like to attend to. It's hardly safe to go around with several thousand dollars in my pocket. I am not — er — acquainted at any of the banks, and if you will be kind enough to give me a word, I should be —" by this time Whateley had scrawled on an envelope. "I thank you, sir."

"All right. It is now two thirty. Be at the office by five fifteen."

"I'll be there."

To a bald-headed solemnity in a marble-slabbed house of dollars Howerson gave the envelope, and a smile of welcome spread broadcast over the financier's countenance and so far upward as to gleam on the crest of his cranium.

It was so pleasant to have money in his pocket that this new depositor kept back five hundred and went forth with his suitcase to touch up his wardrobe and to have his silk hat ironed. Then he bought a watch, wondering as to who was now wearing a ticker of life's seconds once the timekeeper of his father's sermons, a proud possession, but long since entrusted to a stranger over whose door hung a bunch of enormous grapes, but only three in number.

Now arose the question as to what hotel would be safest. He realized that at no time had his mind been free from the dread of meeting an Agent of Justice, and now that he had returned to the scene of his wasted life and his oath, the dread grew heavier. In the crowded streets he imagined that everyone in front turned to look back at him, and that in the rear everyone was dogging his footsteps. Suddenly he felt his heart hang still between two beats, and then to strike like the swing of a sledge. And what was it that had in an instant damned up his blood and in a moment torn it loose? A red cap, an eye gazing through a window at him — Annie Zondish! He stood still, unable to see clearly, for a glimmer like the shake-air heat down the dusty summer road seemed to dance before his eyes. In that second standing still his thoughts were an hour long. Boy companions had called him a game fellow, and he

was as game as the victor of a cock-pit, and had been as much disposed to crow over it; but who ever came off crowing from an encounter with a woman? Roxey Brooks, Queen of the Sand Lots of early memory, in fair fist fight whipped more than a score of lusty men, but when finally a little Irishman knocked her out, he was voted a coward by "society" that had been conquered.

Taking them one at a time or even all of them at once, if desperate occasion demanded, Howerson would have fought the brothers with dramatic heroism, but the "sister" — nothing had taught him how to face her fury or to ward off the thrust of her blade. When his strength came back to him he would have run away, trampling down the bargain-counter shoppers, but just at this moment his vision cleared and he saw that the red cap was a hat trimmed in that clamorous color, worn by a meek creature whose gaze had been fastened not upon him but upon a bit of lace hanging in the window.

"I'd like to make a bet with myself," he mused as he turned away. "I want to bet that I'm not going to be scared again. I'm going to let the past and future take care of themselves; they always have. But we've got to employ a little judgment as we go along, and I believe I'd be safer at a big hotel."

In a tavern where titles trotting about the earth are wont to halt awhile to blow, he inscribed a book. Grimly he smiled as out of smoky memory arose the stenchy lodging house wherein he had reposed his rags upon a slab, his fanatic heart almost beating the Zondish dollars down into the hard board. "But that was in another life, ages and ages ago," he mused.

Later, and out on the pavement, he looked at his

watch, golden threshing machine of time, as leisurely he walked along. Compared with an electric regulator on a jeweler's wall, it was disposed to thresh too fast. He halted and was setting it when a voice near him called out:

"Is it possible that this is George Howerson!"

He started, as if he would leap away from his name, but looked on the dodge, and there stood as ragged a thing as ever caused frightened crow to caw warning to a mate. With yellow whiskers as bushy as the tail of a red fox, the thing yet had the voice of a man. He took off a hat that threatened to shower down in pieces upon the sidewalk, and said: "I've been watching you for several minutes and I didn't think I could be mistaken in that tragedian face. You don't mean to say you've forgotten Yal Watkins."

Howerson thrust forth his hand. "You don't mean it, Yal. Why — "

"Never mind trying to pump up any unnecessary astonishment, George. No matter what sort of a fix you find a fellow in, you oughtn't to show surprise unless he shows by his air that he wants you to," said the tattered philosopher. "Take me down into that den across the way — they'll let anybody in there — and watch me while I devour a few. Do this for old time's sake and then I'll turn you loose. Don't ask me any questions here, for paradoxical as it may seen, I'm hungry."

Without a word Howerson took him by the arm and led him across the street, down into a "dive" steaming with kraut and stewed tripe.

"Now sit down, Yal, and tell me all about it."

"Yes, but first regale me with a stein and some of those savory dishes that feed the air."

" You go ahead and order what you want, especially in the line of something to eat. I've become leary of the other stuff."

" All right, but smile your favors on me in the presence of the waiter. He takes me for a humorist and might look on my order as an old joke. Thank you, George. One more sunbeam like that and I get everything on the bill."

While he was ordering, Howerson sat gazing reminiscently upon him, and back to mind he came, a gay comedian, working " stock " at the old Dearborn Street Theatre. The stage may have been his early love but offered not his early occupation, for when Howerson first knew him he was salesman for a cigar house, comic in saloons at night, with " take-off," song and story. Then he sacrificed salary for ambition, out of which course comes the art of the world. But drudgery, rehearsing one play while playing another, with a performance every night and three matinees a week, wore hard on his mind, broke him down and he lost his job. They said it was liquor, and perhaps largely it was. Drudging labor may fail of its purpose when its purpose is to wear one out, while liquor sooner or later attains its aim, as you have often heard tell and as you will continue to hear as long as you live. The moralizing drinker will assure you of this fact, standing at the bar, and you will agree with him as you take your drink. Watkins recovered in a way, and found employment together with Howerson in a dramatic company traveling to Loon Lake, Beaver Dam, Hodge Center, Lett's Corners and other seats of tragic art. He was Grave-digger at Elsinore and Cobbler at Rome, and howled with lusty lungs when Howerson Antonied the mob; but at Beaver Dam the ship of drama went to

pieces on a rock; and as fruit was ripening in the orchards, the Cobbler and the Antony of this unseasonable voyage picked their way back to Chicago.

Here they took a room, together with an ancient scissors grinder known as Old Luke. Watkins was too much crippled in habits to get back immediately into any abandoned field of trade or of drama, and for a time he let his whiskers grow out and bush at will. In his household they called him "Yellow" then "Yeller" and then "Yal." He had a knack of going out and fetching in liquor, bottles with red stars on the outside and long-tailed comets within. It was Old Luke's habit to get drunk every night, and as it appeared that Yal's whiskers had some relationship with his ability to "fetch," the increasing bushiness of his beard was looked upon as a hopeful "sign of the times."

"Yal" struck a prosperous streak, and rented a room opening into the family homestead; and he could well afford it, being now installed as special agent for the Wolf brand of coffee. After a time he enlarged the scope of his business domain, added Tiger Tea, and one day stepped into the homestead in a garb out-lilying the lily, blushing it into a tulip. He had on white duck trousers, a yellow "wescut" covered with red vines, and a blue broadcloth coat. His beard was trimmed. You could see yourself in his patent leathers, and his gloves smelled like a Vassar commencement. Howerson whistled. The old man looked round, dropped his pipe and sighed, "Good-bye."

Yal brought with him a bit of society news. "Gentlemen," he said, "I feel that you are more or less interested in my affairs, and I have therefore something to impart to you, hoping that you'll pardon me for not having sooner taken you into my confidence.

Not long ago I met a most charming young woman, at a boarding house where I was received with many marks of favor, especially after I added tea to my repertory. Romantic parents in a short-grass district of Kansas had bestowed upon her the name of Lucile, and she showed me the blue-bound book from which they had labeled a greater poem. She had been a model in the cloak department of a department store, but as it was too conspicuous for her modesty she resigned from the position, and at the time of my introduction to her she was cashier in a cheese house. Long story short, I loved, she loved. Long story shorter, we are now living in a flat over on the West Side."

"Married!" groaned old Luke. "You heard me say good-bye, didn't you, Howerson?"

"Married? Just a little more of your valuable time," Yal continued. "Don't believe I ever told you, but a number of years ago I married what I conceived to be as sweet a widow as ever dampened a black veil with her tears. I stand now unshaken in my belief that after this marriage the devil ascended the highest mountain in his extensive territory and laughed to think that in this marriage he had been relieved of the responsibility of looking after his twin sister. And, long story continuing to be short, I withdrew myself from her presence. Her brother, the devil, objected, and I was not able to get a divorce. To spite me she held me as much as she could by law, and so, legally I am still married to her, but in soul, to Lucile."

He retained the room, keeping samples in it, and would drop in every day to speak on the subject of his own happiness. "I have found women in cantos of poetry and chapters of romance," he said, "but none that could light Lucile upstairs. When I used to go home

a little late, Elizabeth, my wife-in-law, would raise the roof and let it fall on me. If I said anything, she'd howl; if I didn't, she'd shriek. But Lucile! Let me tell you something: When I go home now I find coffee and slippers waiting and Lucile reciting poetry. Angel, that's all there is to it; angel and can't help it."

One day when he came in he tried to look sad but failed. He told them that his wife-in-law was dead.

"That's worth a bottle," said old Luke. "Go out and get it."

He did; he brought a bottle that bore three stars, and with a quart of cream stolen from a hallway they made a milky way, and sang songs, the bereaved sometimes joining in the chorus.

"Know what I'm going to do?" said Yal. "I am going to marry Lucile."

"Good-bye," muttered the old man.

He married her. Then he gave up his room. . . . One night he came in, tired and woe-worn in look.

"What's up now?" Howerson inquired.

"Everything. I can't live with her. As soon as she got the law on me, she —" he drooped his way out; and when he came again he told them that the hussy had run away with a tax assessor. He drooped in a corner like a dog that has been kicked, the spirit gone out of him, and in the dark hours they heard him groan, but in the morning he was not there; nor did the old grinder of scissors ever see him again. Death issued a bench warrant for the ancient philosopher and placed it for service in the hands of pneumonia, one of the most active of deputies. As the poet was unable to keep up so large an establishment, the old homestead was abandoned: rent due, thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents. And now, years afterward, this phonographic record played off as

Howerson sat there, silent while Yal Watkins sat before him feeding like a wolf.

"Long time since I saw you, Yal — since you disappeared that night."

"Yep," He foamed his beard from the stein. "Good while."

"Did you ever see Lucile again?"

"Once, not a great while ago. Being the possessor of five pennies I went into a moving picture show to sleep, and I don't know how many performances I must have slept through, when I awoke in the midst of a pathetic scene, where the rich lady gets out of her carriage to bestow a short coin on the heroic tramp who has just jumped off a bridge into a river and saved her beautiful little daughter from drowning. 'This is my time,' I says to myself; and then I whispers to a lady who sat beside me in the tearful twilight: 'Ma'm,' I says, 'I am a poor tramp and I have saved girls from drowning — made a business of it. Won't you please give me as much as ten cents, which imperious nature urges me to invest in provender?' Just then the light leaped up and I recognized Lucile. Pride mastered me, George. You may believe that a man can sink below all pride, but he can't. No, he has some left no matter how low. So I said 'I beg your pardon, I cannot accept ten cents from you.' She fidgeted about to let me pass, and I caught a whiff of her unmistakable perfume. That was my last sight of her. . . . Lord, but you are festive. What are you doing now, George?"

"Well, I'm not selling family albums."

"No, nor poetry either, from the looks of those duds. I'm glad to see you doing well, but as for me, I guess I'm down to stay. I used to light on my feet when I fell — on one foot anyhow — but the last time I hit the

ground all over. Don't suppose you ever begged, did you, George?"

Howerson shuddered. "Gods, no! But there was a time and not so long ago in actual days but centuries in the mind when I was ready for anything — suicide, murder. Then Fate's eye twinkled a change and — "

"Run it down, George. Don't blank verse me; tell me about it."

"Not now, Yal. But I'll tell you this, old fellow: You are coming up again. I'm going to help you, and the only way to help a man is to help him to help himself; and a man sometimes succeeds best in a line he happens on by accident, Yal."

"Some men, maybe so, George; but not me. I have to know something about the works of a scheme before I can do anything with it. I'm down and out."

"Don't you believe it, Yal. Get through with your snack and we'll make something happen."

Watkins shook his head. "You can come down and talk clod when you try, George, and I appreciate your faith in me, but it's too late."

"No, not too late, Yal. Come with me."

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW MR. WATKINS

Tenderer of tread than one who minces merely on his uppers, Watkins limped across the cobbles, holding tight the arm of his friend. In the crowd hardly anything is grotesque, for all you catch of it is a glimpse. But among the leisurely gazers of a village where human oddities laugh at things unseemly to them, what a snicker would have enlivened the scene of a silk hat escorting a bundle of rags!

At the portals of a big department store Yal pulled back, saying they would not let him enter, but Howerson urged him gently on, encouraging him, remembering his own repulse from that great, crowd-swallowing door. Coming without a protector Rags would have fluttered faster coming out than going in, but now they gave a kindly smile to the protege of millionaire benevolence. And not long afterward, when Howerson and Mr. Watkins, Esq., came out of a bath parlor wherein the latter had arrayed himself in shining raiment, the soul-searching eyes of his faithful dog, had he possessed one, might not have recognized him. With beard trimmed to cavalier point, with modest though fetching necktie, with silk hat flashing in kindred to Howerson's own, with Easter in his step and a July glow of gratitude in his eye, this man, new without and within, kept glad pace with his old companion, new also in body and in soul.

"Where are you taking me now, George?"

"I'm leading you around, to accustom you to the

altitude. My shoot-up was as sudden as yours, and it almost took my breath. The doctors say it's dangerous." Howerson laughed. "The old scissors grinder would call you a fetcher now, sure enough. Poor old chap — never could get together money enough to keep from getting drunk."

"George, that might sound funny to some folks," said Mr. Watkins; "but you and I know that poverty is more the cause of drunkenness than drunkenness is of poverty."

"Yes, we feel it, and it takes strong evidence to prove away a feeling. The spirit of reformation is the spirit of responsibility. When a fellow is too proud to steal we call him honest."

"That's right. . . . Old Thespian, you've spent about a hundred on me and have given me ten dollars besides. Now what? What do you ask of me?"

"Not to pawn your coat."

"Same sententious old George. And which means —"

"That you are to go to work."

"Watch me, George," and slowly they walked along. Suddenly Yal brought his friend to a halt, pointing to a sign which at night broke out in electric bubbles across the whole front of a building, the name of a cigar, and said: "I used to work for the people who sell that noxious weed, and I believe that if old John Cravier is living and could size me up now, he'd give me a job. Let's go over and see."

Old John Cravier was living, was at his desk in the office, occupying a chair which during thirty years he had left twice on vacation, once to attend a grand Conclave of Templars in Los Angeles and once to give one hundred and eight dollars for a ten minutes' fight with a Minnesota muskellunge which, owing to the snapping

of a line, did not now, stuffed and with sharp teeth showing, occupy a place on the old man's wall. He remembered Watkins who foolishly had quit a growing business to chase shadows on the stage. Could it be possible that this was the same Watkins? Yal assured him that it was, and Howerson, who by this time had been introduced, stood up straight and from the depths of his important chest vouched for the fact.

"After all," said the old man, "there isn't so much of a change in you except that you are — well, even a little more dressy than you used to be. And your friend, Mr. — um-um — is he in the cigar business? Won't you sit down?"

They sat down and Mr. "um — um" spoke for himself, glancing at his watch. No, just at present he was not in the cigar business, but his friend Watkins thought of reentering that particular branch of trade, after his long vacation abroad. "Mr. Watkins," said the old gentleman, "I think we need you. Call to-morrow at nine o'clock."

Out in the street again and walking toward Whateley's office, Howerson said: "How easy it is for the prosperous."

"You bet you," laughed Yal, keeping quick step with him. "It's a dark day when the flash don't fetch 'em. That long vacation abroad was a deadener. Abroad at night without a bed, you must have meant. Virtuous is he who lies for a friend."

"Yes, Colonel Watkins, and as the poet hath it, or ought to, 'thrice armed is he who finds his lying just.'"

"Verily, verily. And watch old Yal's smoke. I land back into that business with a whoop."

"Well," said Howerson, "I must leave you here." He held out his hand. For a moment or two Yal did not

appear to see it. He stood looking at something far away. "I say I must leave you here."

Yal turned slowly and took Howerson's hand, looked into his eyes, breathing hard through the nose; and walked off stumblingly, without a word.

In the anteroom of Whateley's foundry of schemes, Jim, the bouncer, looked up from a pink sporting sheet, dropped it, rolled off his chair and bowed in that restraint which with the powerful of muscle is nearly always graceful. Was Mr. Whateley in? Sure thing. Always in to Mr. Howerson. Step right in. Howerson stepped into the "Swage-room," as a distressed manufacturer in iron had termed it. Whateley looked up, glanced at his watch, nodded toward a chair and said: "The machine will be here in fifteen minutes. Sit down."

"Thank you. I can leave for the South this evening, sir."

The old man looked at him with a nod of appreciation. "No need. Leave to-morrow morning. The attorney for the estate, now on his way from Washington to New Orleans, will meet you at the St. Charles at noon, day after to-morrow. He has full power to close with you, and you with him." He handed Howerson an envelope. "Your credentials."

Miss Gwin, stenographer, came in like a whisper, placed letters upon the desk and escaped like a timid sigh. Old Calvin took them up, slowly, one by one. He opened one, two, on up to five, glancing at them and casting them aside; but one of them he read, smiled over it, and put it into his pocket.

"Now, Mr. Howerson, if you are ready, we'll go."

Goggle-eyes, chauffeur, was waiting, grim in the twilight. Life was but a twilight for this spurter through

dawns, noons and evenings, and devoted to his trade regardless of the master he served, his professional pride was to keep as obscure as possible the number dangling at the tail of his dragon. It seemed that Whateley never spoke to him except under stress, regarding him as the culminating evil of modern rush, different from all other beings, a link between crime and necessity.

The cold wind had blown away the premature spring. On a half note the deceived robin had hushed his song, and the sparrow, basker in hot dust or in snowdrift, twittered his revengeful delight.

The old man turned up the collar of his Napoleonic coat and permitted the wind to blow. How many rags that wind fluttered — rags of the old man, deplorable; but the rags of the child, a crime! Against the North Shore sea wall, the waves were booming; to the Poet, music, to the Millionaire, power.

Whateley spoke: "Little Calvin's wolf coat came in good time."

"Yes," Howerson was glad to answer, "he said it was going to turn cold."

A chuckle came up out of the collar of the great coat. "He wanted an excuse for wearing it. Ha! in that lies some of the world's shrewdest prognostications, whims of older children."

Howerson would have been pleased to speculate with him on this text, but still under the restraint of feeling his way, he said: "I'm glad to see that you have passed on down to him your own rugged constitution," and his senses conveyed to his nerves the intelligence that he had made a hit.

"Ha, I hope so, believe so. As rugged as a cub bear. We may love the weak, sir, but we love and admire the strong. In this we are like Nature herself, only Nature

jumps on the weak without loving it, while she exults in the strong. As for myself, Mr. Howerson, I've never known a sick day, scarcely a day of weariness. And why? Not because I stood originally in Nature's — er — favoritism, but because I was forced into taking an advantage of her; and she couldn't violate her own law in order to help herself. Early poverty is a pretty shrewd physician and prescribes a diet for health, I tell you.

" My wife used to say, ' Calvin, you despise this poor fellow because he is weak physically,' and I used to deny it, but for the most part she spoke the truth. Inclined to be religious, especially of a Sunday morning when the sun seems brighter than on other days, we try to apologize for the truth that nature has hidden within us. I am not much on novels, haven't read many, and largely for the reason that as soon as a man — well, say an Englishman or an American — soon as he takes up a pen he begins to deplore naturalness in his brother, and sometimes halts his story to — er — apologize for the fact that he unintentionally became interesting. A fellow with thin wrists and cuffs that rattle when you shake hands with him, is made to represent intellectual strength, and a subdued looking woman with a class-meeting smirk, holds all the virtues of home. But I speak as a man who is drawn into light reading rather late in life. I suppose, sir, you would regard Thackeray as a novelist of the first class."

" One of the greatest artists of fiction," Howerson answered.

" Ah! That is also my daughter's notion. I confess to slim knowledge on such subjects, and it's rather a queer time to discuss them, here in this wind, but coming out of the office my mind looks about for relief in — I

might say, experimental things. I get more enjoyment out of Mommsen's Rome, but my daughter wanted me to read Thackeray, and I did. Wonderful observation, the sharp side, but it strikes me that he is unnecessarily delayed on his journey. He lets a score of vehicles pass and then prefers to walk. Too slow for me. He does too much fine-spun work between what one character and another one says."

Howerson was encouraged to speak his mind. "Yet he has a wonderful way of saying things — "

The old man interrupted him with a laugh. "True — but you and I, Mr. Howerson, are more concerned with their doing. Not but that you seem to have proved your proficiency in both lines."

"If I have proved competent, it was you who made me so."

Whateley laughed again. "I think that in you, Mr. Howerson, I have found a sort of genius."

"Or rather a disease, Mr. Whateley, which when cured, may be found not worth the trouble. My hope is that the medicine may not be expensive," and when the old man laughed again as if pleased with his fight against the wind, Howerson was silent.

The machine halted at the curb in front of the big iron gate. Goggles got out and with a twist snatched the door open, drooping to think that he had crippled no one on the way. The big gate clanged shut. The renegade Agent of Justice had entered the home precincts of the man whose nod meant elation or distress. And how simple it was, after all; and how simple is everything when you are permitted to come up close and look into its countenance!

But no reading man could enter old Calvin's library and look about him with the eye of indifference. There

were books not bound for show, sweet old poems in night caps, and striding tragedies in jack boots. Beneath modest hoods reposed religion, and in confident calf science stood secure.

For a time the visitor was alone, and then a voice called out: "I hope you haven't forgotten me, Mr. Howerson."

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD MAN'S LETTER

The Poet realized now that Rose Whateley had been visual and spiritual in his mind during all the hour-years of his resurrected life. And as he looked at her he fancied that she illumined the twilight as she came into the room. She held forth her hand, and again he felt her warm and generous grasp, and he knew that here was a woman who could be a friend. There was none of the meaningless laughter of hypocritical courtesy, none of the graceful lowering of conscious dignity, no delicate patronage, but the frankness of a true welcome. She turned away for a moment and pressed a button on the wall near the door and a chandelier threw down its light — in weak rivalry of her own, was the Poet's thought. Now laughing, not to make herself more agreeable but because she really was amused, she said that it looked as if business was preparing for a shady transaction, with the lights so low. "Yes, I mean you," she added, speaking to her father, who at this moment entered the room. He put his arm about her, kissed her, laughing as tenderly and with as simple a resignation under gentle rebuke as if he were old Dr. Primrose himself. Not alone his voice but his countenance bore out this resemblance, for the mask of tragedy had been left at his office, and his eyes were not the eyes that looked down in worry at the letters on his desk. Sometimes care rode his broad shoulders home, into the hallway, the library, to be

shaken off only at the Cabin door, but this was not one of the times. She saw that something had pleased him, something other than material things, and she asked him what it was, hanging persuasively on his arm; and she knew that he would withhold the telling of it, for he always delayed the naming of his cause for pleasant reflection, to tease her.

How much she looked like him as she stood so near him; his conquering eyes were her own, had they been softer, and her mouth his, if harder with fight and determination. With her strength, her fearlessness and her evident persistency in the achievement of an aim, she would have been a troublesome suffragette in the neighborhood of Asquith's house. In her own country she had been urged to lend "her great personality" to the cause. Her brother declared that she encouraged these solicitations for the humor she got out of them, and she *was* greatly amused; and when some attenuated spinster had endangered her robin ankles by walking away, she would convulse old Paul and little Calvin with her mimicry of those petticoated Websters. But to her father she often said, " They are going to conquer, just as the Abolitionists conquered, by intelligence and persistency."

" Come now," she said to old Calvin, still hanging on his arm, " you must tell me."

" Tell you what, my dear? "

" You know. What has brought you such good humor, that's what."

" Ha, always in good humor," the old man laughed. " Nobody ever saw me out of humor."

" Then you tell me, Mr. Howerson," and this appeal, this persuasive melody, tingled the Poet's blood.

" I don't know, Miss Whateley, unless it was brought about by a letter I saw him smiling over in the office."

Old Calvin, instead of being displeased with so close an observation of him as he had sat at his desk, laughed louder than ever. "Yes, a letter," he owned. "Wonderful news — for me."

"Give it to me this instant, sir. How dare you have any secrets from me! Give it to me, I say!" He pretended to pull hard away from her. At this moment old Paul announced: "The Rev. Dr. Henshaw."

The doctor entered. He happened to be passing he said, and trusted that his — ah — dropping in was no intrusion. None at all, he was assured, for Whateley gave him a cordial hand, and Rose gave him the regulation smile of the church, such as follows the presentation of a pair of homemade slippers; and for a moment she warmed his cool hand with her own. How glad he was to meet Howerson, when told that the Poet was connected with Whateley's great establishment. He reached for Howerson's hand the second time when fully he had realized the importance of the information. The name seemed familiar to him, old family undoubtedly. He had known a Dr. Howerton, of Dartmouth, most scholarly man.

"Hower — *son*, and not Hower — ton," said Rose, sharing sly merriment with the Poet.

"Oh, I see; very old Virginia name. Delighted to meet you, sir, I am sure. I have — er — "

Here dinner was called and the doctor wheeled about to Whateley with an apology for his thoughtlessness in stopping at such an hour. At heart old Calvin had no more ceremony than had been practiced in his father's home, and he put his hand on the doctor's shoulder. "Come and eat a bite with us. We're glad to have you, and I am especially so on this occasion. That letter, Rose. Ha!"

Sometimes out of a determination not to be astonished, we hurt our sense of just appreciation; and after leaving this house the Poet had but a vague impression of some of its ancient art treasures, the bronzes and marbles in the great hallway, the paintings inviting the mind to good cheer, the subdued splendor of the dining room. An erratic architect, an Italian, had in this room reproduced some old memory or indulged a free fancy of his own, no one knew which. His " flight," as an American rival termed it, was admired intrinsically by the average critic until some one wealthy enough and traveled enough to have weight declared it a " Cloister illuminated," and this, of course, brought about a division of opinion.

In the dining room the Poet was presented to Dan Whateley and to Harriet, his wife, of note as the mother of little Calvin. The lawyer said that he was pleased to meet Howerson, not suspecting that he was a poet; and Harriet, believing that aestheticism was a nervous synonym for physical weakness, surveying with quivering eye the size and evident strength of the visitor, breathed inwardly a hope that she might not regret the meeting. The quality of physical power was a virtue to the son, a vulgarity to the mother; but how fondly she looked upon the Reverend Doctor Henshaw! He made music of her prated ills, listened to her nerves and was charmed with the faint beating of her heart.

When they all of them were seated, talking while thinking of something to say, the boy bounded into the room, still coated in the hide of the wolf. It had been said that were the old man to dine the country's chief executive, together with his cabinet and the decorated plenipotentiaries of all nations, little Calvin would find a place at the board. He shouted a welcome to Hower-

son, and with a leap and a laugh, bounded upon his chair next his grandfather, at the head of the table. His mother had been rapt in attention upon the doctor, who was telling her of the distress he had been put to by eating a sausage in Antwerp, and did not for a moment realize the youngster's garb, but when she gathered fully, she cried out:

"Calvin, take off that hor — that hot coat."

Hot was substituted for horrid out of respect for Howerson, to whom she now turned with a smile somewhat niggard of illumination. But to the boy she repeated her demand, while the old man winked at Rose and Howerson and chuckled.

"Must I take it off, grandpa?" the boy appealed.

"Yes," said old Calvin, "better take it off. Don't you think so, Mr. Howerson?"

"Let me see," said the Poet. "Why, yes! Old Dick Bluke, the hunter, always took off his wolf coat when he sat down to eat."

By this time the boy's coat was off, but he hung it on the back of his chair; and now, all threat of a family row having passed, the doctor looked down into his soup and remembered that he had not been called on to ask a blessing. But Whateley was perhaps pardonable, he mused. The spoiled and impudent youngster who ought to be spanked and sent away, was the cause. Harriet was speaking to him and the good man gave her his smiling attention. She was talking about Art in the Vatican. After beholding it in silent wonder one must feel that all the ages had been robbed. Compared with it, think of the poverty of England, of Germany and of even France herself; and as for poor America, a pauper indeed!

Over America the doctor sighed. "Ah, in this country, my dear Mrs. Whateley, we have no autochthonous art."

"I hope not," Rose laughed.

Howerson caught her fun-loving eye, the old man chuckled, Dan haw-hawed, and the impudent boy cried out, "Got his goat, didn't she, grandpa?"

Wealth does not change human nature. There is more of laughter in a palace than in a hovel, and mischief may be rude anywhere. Whateley's face grew red with the mirth-blood that flew to his countenance, and slyly with a napkin Howerson dammed up his own laughter. Harriet sat back with a gasp, and Rose turned to the doctor with eyes beseeching his pardon, and said:

"We are all the subjects of a spoiled little prince, Doctor."

Henshaw smiled upward, ah-hahed and replied: "Dear, very dear little fellow, light of a devoted household." But his heart said, "Pity I couldn't have lived in Scotland two hundred years ago and had him and the rest of you beneath my wing, the little ruffian." Then aloud, "Charming innocence, gamboling on life's doorstep."

"Calvin," said the old man, "behave yourself."

And his mother: "Father, he constantly humiliates us all with his alley and back-lot expressions, and it is high time to take him in hand. Please don't blame me, Dr. Henshaw. He is quite beyond my control, I assure you. The other day when we were getting him ready for Sunday school he cried out that only 'rummies' went to such places. I ought not to repeat it, but his grandfather — you know it, Rose, just as well as I do — seems to take delight in it. And as for his father — " the

mother sighed, and her husband, disturbed in his meditations as one might be by the stopping of a clock, looked up and inquired:

"What is it, dear?"

"I say you do nothing to restrain Calvin."

"Don't worry about little Calvin," the old man spoke up. "If there's a boy that's coming out all right, he is the chap. Eh, my son?"

"You bet — I mean yes, sir."

"Ah, please note the improvement already, my dear Harriet," the head of the house requested her, and she noted it with a dim smile and a sad shake of the head.

"I suppose every mother is anxious for her son, if I may be permitted to speak," said the Poet. "On most household subjects I am ignorant, but I know something about boys; and I claim the freedom to say, not only here but everywhere, that I am more indebted to this little fellow than to all the rest of mankind living to-day. It was his faith in me — "

"Why, you astonish me," Harriet put in, not overpleased at the acknowledgment.

Howerson bowed to her. "It astonishes me, madam."

"You give me a coat that a wolf used to gallop about in and howl when the night was dark; and a boy that tried to take it away from me would get beaned, wouldn't he, Mr. Howerson?" appealed Calvin, putting his hand back upon the bristles of the wolf.

"He'd have to fight, I tell you," said the Poet.

The old man was immensely pleased and upon Howerson he looked with a kindly eye; and Dan came out of one of his legal abstractions to thank the visitor for the interest he felt for "my great little cub," he said, and added: "Ah, and, Mr. Howerson, father tells us that

you accomplished wonders out at Glenwich. You must have had good business training."

Here the doctor saved Howerson the embarrassment of confessing that he had received no business training, that with him it was all lucky blundering. That wise and experienced man spoke up with the declaration that to achieve — ah — in no matter what line, we must have been trained. Even piety itself required early training.

"Even then we don't always make a success of it," old Calvin declared. "But sometimes, to our great surprise, we succeed in something that we haven't been trained for. And now, Rose, this leads back to the subject of why I seemed pleased.

"About six months ago, over in Michigan, I was invited by a committee of inspection to go out to an asylum for the insane. I don't take much pleasure in going to such places and I would have passed it up but for the fact that the chairman of the committee took such pride in the place — ahem — together with a business scheme I had on hand with him. So I went along. Lunch was served in a long hall and speeches were made complimentary to the institution and the board of management, and then the inspection began. I can stand a great deal of hard work and exposure but I can't stand having things explained to me, with the understanding that praise is to follow; so I got away from the others and started out on an investigation of my own. Out on the lawn beneath a tree sat a most distinguished-looking oldish man, with gold-rimmed glasses and a dignity assorted to fit. I would have passed on, leaving him free to pursue his communion with — "

"Exactly," said Henshaw. "Exactly, sir."

"With nature," continued Whateley, "but he got

up, bowed and invited me to sit down. I did so and at once he entered upon easy conversation, enjoyable to me, I assure you; and I soon found that he was a man of remarkable information. Not only this, but he was evidently a scholar, so much so that I reached out, in defense of my own — er — vanity, and drew him into my own territory, but even here he was equally at home, so, for the most part I sat back and let him talk. In plain words he didn't tell me he was a philanthropist, but from his tone I gathered that he had donated the land for the asylum. His polished observations were so shrewd that I thought he might be a member of the United States Senate; he shifted to theology and I felt that he must adorn some fashionable pulpit; he got down to farming, down into the subsoil, and I could fancy him stepping out of the furrow into the Agricultural Department of a State University.

" He was, I thought, about the best balanced man I had ever met, and when after a time he told me his name I was somewhat astonished that I had never heard of him; and upon introducing myself, I was a little nipped to see that my name was unknown to him. Well, he talked about nearly everything within my range, and getting up to rejoin the committee I shook hands with him. He impressed me so deeply that I spoke to the chairman of the committee, and the superintendent of the asylum, standing near, answered my question.

" ' Oh, old Jacob Lusk. Yes, very interesting man. He's been here ten years.' ' You mean in this neighborhood? ' said I, and he smiled and replied: ' In this institution.' ' What,' I cried, ' you don't mean that he is an inmate! ' And he answered, ' Not only that, but an incurable.' So, like nearly every person who visits such places, I had been duped. ' I don't think I ever talked

to a more intelligent man,' I said to the superintendent, and he replied, 'Yes, on all subjects but one. You didn't happen to speak of the *world*, did you?' 'No, I believe not.' 'Well, if you had you would have come away with a different opinion.'

"Now my curiosity was aroused sure enough. So while the committee was busy inspecting the water supply, I slipped back to the tree where on the bench still sat Jacob Lusk. He smiled pleasantly and motioned me to sit down. I did so, and began to talk about the swiftness of life as compared with years ago, and quietly he nodded his agreement to all I said; but when I remarked, 'This is a queer old world,' he jumped to his feet.

"'This world!' he exclaimed; 'yes, I made it, created it. Let me tell you: Millions of ages ago, I stood with one foot in a mist and the other foot in the black bosom of nothing, infinite space between them. Suddenly I found between the thumb and index finger of my right hand a grain of sand. For millions and millions of years I had stood there, and never before had I felt that grain of sand. It was interesting, this speck of substance in a universe of nothing, and I began to roll it about as you have seen men roll a bread pill after dinner. Suddenly I was surprised to find that it was growing larger and larger — large as a hazelnut, a ball, orange, cocoanut — gods, a barrel! But now I was whirling it over and over, with both hands. Soon it was as big as a house, and instead of my whirling it, it began to whirl me. All this time it was getting bigger and bigger, till at length I could walk upon it; and gradually I lost the sense of its swift motion. And, what was this! I was getting smaller and smaller, and what had been centuries, now become as minutes. I saw this great ball

crack and an ocean of water surge into the crevice; I felt a mighty shudder, and mountains rose up. Then came trees, grass, the earth as it is now. And here I stand, its creator, without credit for the mighty work — its creator who made it out of nothing!'

"'No, not out of nothing,' I said, humoring him, 'but out of a grain of sand. And let me ask you: Where did you get that grain of sand? Who made *it*?'

"He looked at me — I never before saw such an expression of countenance — looked at me and turning, ran away, shouting: 'Who made the grain of sand — where did I get it! God, where did I get the grain of sand!'

"And now," continued old Calvin, "I get this letter from the superintendent of the asylum." Then, taking the letter from his pocket he read:

"'My Dear Mr. Whateley: I suppose you remember Jacob Lusk who thought he made the earth, and I know that it would be pretty hard for me to forget the expression of his countenance as he came running past me, crying out, 'Where did I get that grain of sand!' You told me that you just happened to ask him the question; but do you know what so simple a thing as the asking of that question did? It set him to thinking, took his mind off himself and set it to speculating as to who made the grain of sand, started the flow of stagnant blood, as it were, and now he is completely cured, as sane a man as you ever saw. He has returned to his home near Detroit, and has again taken up the work that fell out of his hands so many years ago, that of librarian. He cannot recall who asked him the question, and importuned me to tell him, but knowing that you did not care to bother with the matter, I withheld it. I write this only to empha-

size an old truth — how wonderful may be the ultimate result of a simple cause.'

"Bother with it?" commented Whateley before anyone had found aught to say. "Why it is a delight to me to think of it; and I am going to send that old gentleman a check."

Rose cried out that he was the dearest and kindest hearted of all men, so little she knew that Miss Gwin's mother was weeping because the tender-hearted man was fighting the verdict awarding her five thousand dollars for the slaughter of her husband. Dan paid but little heed, no question of law or politics arising; but Howerson was aroused, showed it in his countenance, in his voice when he spoke: "A soul poem," he said; "an inspiration to revoke the order of tragedy, for what is more tragic than a mind struggling to shift the weight of a darkening blight! Science is getting at the machine, man; but how far we are yet from an understanding of man, the mind — a creating creation, experimenting universe, banished by self worry, poisoned like the snake that bites itself, and cured with a spiritual balm, a word."

"I pass," said Dan.

Dr. Henshaw did not quite gather — ahem — fully the meaning of Mr. Howerson. Evidently, however, he made a great mystery of the mind, and well enough, it was true. "But man was created in the image of his Maker and therefore — er — his mind, with all of its mystery, is explained. But your experience was quite remarkable, Mr. Whateley — very remarkable, I assure you. I have had to deal with cases, well, not wholly but almost similar. It is not the — I might say — not the province of science to reach the mind; that blessed mission is reserved

for religion. Oh, no, I have eaten sufficiently, thank you. I find that as we grow older we ought to eat less, an example set by Louis — Canario, was it? Famous Italian who ate oftener and less as he grew older, and in consequence lived to be a hundred and three, writing at ninety-five an essay that found favor with Montaigne. But as I was going to say — "

"Beg your pardon," Rose in mischief interposed, "but was it science or religion that enabled him to write essays at ninety-five? Didn't you say something about his diet? "

"Ah, possibly — assuredly. But it was the religious health of his mind that prompted him to — er — devise a salutary diet. Now then, as to the interesting case just related by you, my dear Mr. Whateley! Your question concerning the grain of sand was not idly casual on your part, but was a true psychologic incentive."

"I pass," said Dan, and his wife looked at him with rebuke in her eyes. Her nurtured anemia loved the talk that savored of books, and nothing could be more unsorted than her husband's criminal docket attempt at humor; so she looked at him but caught not his experienced eye. Then, upon Howerson, she bestowed the grace of a rare smile. She had scented mystery in what he had tried to say, and from this time forward was likely to be more or less interested in him. He was not so vulgar as his size had declared. Howerson felt that he had cracked her thin ice, for he addressed a remark to her and was rewarded with a gracious answer. Rose, who had missed nothing of this peace treaty, looked on with favor; and the old man, catching the spirit of Harriet's surrender, no doubt credited his new assistant with an achievement superior to his Glenwich conquest. During all this time the boy had kept quiet, but now he

wanted to know all about the grain of sand in the funny old man's eye.

"Dear inquiring little fellow," said the doctor, "catching at the dripping cup of truth! It was not in his eye — er, what is his name? Ah, Calvin. Not in his eye, Calvin, but between his fingers — so!" The wise man caught up a crumb of bread and between thumb and finger pilled it in illustration.

"But it didn't hurt him, did it?" Calvin persisted.

"Oh, no, no, not at all."

"Then what made him run away, crying?"

"My dear Doctor," said Harriet, "please don't pay any attention to him."

"Oh, yes, yes; it is a pleasure I assure you. He didn't know where the sand came from, my little man; he —"

"Got it out of his shoe," cried the boy, dismissing the doctor and turning to Howerson, his hero; and the doctor was glad enough to escape.

Then followed the congenial talk of better acquaintance. Rose, Harriet and Howerson talked — not of the theatre but of great drama, which neither of them would have gone to see, and they wondered why there were no real plays now, such as illumined a ruder age. Howerson knew why, but did not explain. His experience taught him that the public had conspired to head off actors who bore the dangerous threat of future greatness.

At a length to him most charming, Miss Whateley dwelt upon their meeting in her father's office, their talk on the effect of clothes. With little Calvin keen to do him honor, and knowing that the old man looked on him in faith, Howerson had been proud but for the secret rat gnawing at his heart. Sometimes it would run away as if frightened, only to return, to listen and to gnaw.

Sometimes he fancied that he could hear it, felt that when someone laughed it was still for a moment, scared, but quickly returned to its work. "One of these days I must open my bosom and let it out," he mused.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AMUSING FOLLIES OF LIFE

Henshaw said that as the gentlemen doubtless were going to withdraw themselves to the library to smoke, he would — ah — virtue himself with the society of the ladies. The gentlemen raised no protest, granting to the church its inherited privilege of avoiding men on account of the things that men do. But Rose demurred with a laugh. "Not against your flattering preference, Doctor," she said, "but because we rebel against banishment."

The doctor said that he was pleased to know that the ladies were — ah — so indulgent as to put up with tobacco smoke. It was great liberality, he was sure. Such was the charm of woman, her patience and her ultimate power for good. Before his dear wife had passed on to her reward, had he smoked, she would have lighted his pipe for him. "Of course such a question never arose, my dear Miss Whateley — surely not; but I am certain she would, for her life was one continuous sacrifice. But she had to go; and I was not with her to soothe her last moments, being abroad at the time on my first European tour. Ahem."

Old Calvin winked at his daughter. He had crushed the commercial life out of men, had made the countenance of a rival corporation grin in yellow agony, but he could not make harmony of the preacher's religion and his selfishness. In the library he brought forth a box of cigars such as toughened students burn to smoke

out a mamma pet, fresh veal from the pasture. He knew that Rose was proof against their strength; she had lighted them for him; knew that Dan had cured Harriet like a ham. The doctor avowed that a good cigar did not distress him. He had known a bishop of the Church of England who smoked while composing his sermons; and Whateley declaring that he was glad to know it, emitted smoke like a tar kiln of his native commonwealth. The doctor coughed and Rose raised a window.

Old Calvin grew genial, talked about the amusing follies of life. On the subject of distresses he could have given expert testimony. Henshaw, having chameleoned his color from society, reflected no hue with which Whateley was familiar. The experiences of the preacher were not interesting to the man of the world, but every phase of Whateley's life held interest for the preacher: Whateley could build churches. Dan smoked with his eyes half shut, dreaming of political leadership. When he was too sluggish to think, he dreamed. His mind was not vivid enough to project a vision. The boy sat on Howerson's knee and was quiet. His mind was a cinematograph of pictures. Old Whateley still saw visions and the soul of them was little Calvin. The poet's conquest of this boy meant much. The preacher was shrewd enough to see it, and warmed toward Howerson.

"It is, I might say, a little singular that I have not met you before this, Mr. Howerson," he said. "But I suppose you are a very busy man; assuredly so."

"Well, of late I have been rather active."

"He can jump fu'ther than you can," cried the boy.

"Ah, I shouldn't wonder, my dear little man. My jumping days are over. I should be much pleased to

see you at my church, Mr. Howerson. Miss Whateley, who is kind enough to take an interest in our affairs, would no doubt show you the way. Next Sunday I am to preach on ' The Modern Jew in Business.' "

Howerson said that it would be pretty hard to find the modern Jew not in business. He was waiting for Rose's offer to show him the way to the church door, and with a kindly smile the offer came. Howerson thanked her and then turned to Dr. Henshaw. " I should like to hear your sermon on a subject so interesting, but I shall leave the city early to-morrow morning."

" Ah, too bad," said the doctor. " May I expect you, my very dear Mr. Whateley? "

The old man did not knock the leaves off the bush with beating about it. " Hardly. The fact is I know too much of the modern Jew in business already. I have met the gentleman; and I have had to set the alarm clock in order to get there first. Ha, but when you find out anything new about religion or even the church, let me know and I'll be there."

" My very dear Mr. Whateley," said the doctor, " all truths are as old as the universe, as the grain of sand that the crazy man found between his fingers. But we come upon new applications, and out of them come progress and reformation. Ah, thank you." This was addressed to Harriet who had raised the window higher. She said that the smoke was thick enough to cut, and old Calvin cut it with a gesture to remark:

" All of which is true, Doctor. Don't mistake me for a critic. When a man appears to know his own game, and he ought to, I acknowledge it; I don't play against him. I don't care what a man thinks on subjects that are beyond me. I grant him full scope and tell him to make the best of it. It's what a man does that stirs up

my interest. Somebody said that a man can't violate his nature, no matter what he *says* that he thinks, and in the main — "

"You mean 'for the most part,' " Rose laughed, harping on one of his accustomed expressions.

He nodded. "And for the most part this may be true, but a man is often stimulated by a sudden whim to act in a manner contrary to his recognized nature, do something in a second and regret it all his life."

The doctor smiled. On his part a smile was set up as evidence that he was not quite astonished but was prepared to be at any moment. "Very, very true, Mr. Whateley, but is it not consistent with — ah — certain natures to be given over to sudden whims? Society — "

"Society is something I know but little about," Whateley cut in with his sickle, accepting the word in its narrowest meaning. "I know what it is for a man to stand in his reception room and smile into countenances he has a contempt for, to smile down his ignorance of books that he never read, and to compliment an agony tortured out of a piano harmless enough if let alone. Don't mistake me by believing that I dislike company, for I don't. I like to have the neighbors drop in, those not pretentiously rich, especially; for, to tell you a truth that may seem a little queer, I don't feel at ease among what you might call the high-flyers. The days of my own poverty, though a long time ago, are still too fresh in my mind. I know that men who by their own shrewdness acquire great wealth are for the most part snobbish, but I can't be one of them. To make this confession perfectly free, and you know, Mr. Howerson, we all sooner or later have to make confession of ourselves — let me declare myself a democrat, paying tribute to no aristocracy except the aristocracy of the

mind. I don't mean to education, for that may mean industry and opportunity, but the mind which without opportunity, creates. I don't know what your chances have been in the past, Mr. Howerson, but out at Glenwich, sir, you created something out of almost nothing."

"Do tell us your side of the story," Rose cried out, and the doctor smiled and was sure that it would be most interesting. The boy looked up into the Poet's face. "Tell 'em how you bought my coat," he said. Dan was half asleep, his cigar between his fingers. Harriet pretended to be interested, but her secret desire was that the others might give her an opportunity to tell the doctor that she had not eaten a sausage at Antwerp, but that if she had it would not have agreed with her.

With his arms about little Calvin, Howerson drew him close as he bent over him. Something that old Calvin had said ploughed deep in his mind. It was not the generous reference to his Glenwich work; it was, "We all sooner or later have to make confession of ourselves." They all of them were looking at him, waiting. Dan had opened his eyes.

"Let my Glenwich work be passed over lightly, as it deserves to be," he said. "Whatever it was, much or little, it was due to this little fellow's faith in me. He found me a failure and left me worthy of confidence. I was a grain of sand, not between the thumb and finger of a man whose mind was gasping for life, but between those blessed little hands, and he rolled me into a universe of gratitude."

"You astonish me," Henshaw exclaimed, and in truth. Rose leaned toward the Poet, and upon him old Calvin turned an interested eye.

"Go on, Mr. Howerson," he said.

The eyes of the young woman gazed upon him with

too much sympathy. He had been led into saying too much. The time was yet too green. But it was difficult to shift his ground; it threatened to cave in. "Tell on, Mr. Howerson," commanded the boy.

"Faith is the sire of inspiration," he began, "scoring" for a start. "Calvin said, 'You can trust Mr. Howerson, can't you, grandpa?' and from that moment I could safely have been trusted with a million dollars. Faith inspired me to succeed. . . . I cannot hope now to make myself understood, but you will understand when there comes that time for free confession. Miss Whateley, it may interest you, and perhaps let me down a little in your opinion, to know that I was one of the worst actors that ever helped to improvise a stage out of a horse trough and a barn door. Hugo says that destiny is approached by crossroads, but it seemed to have been demanded of me that I should scale fences and tear my way through briar patches. My chart led me through bogs, into the home of the Jack-o-Lantern. The letters on my banner spelled 'Disaster.' But Calvin rubbed out 'Disaster' and wrote 'Achievement.' Didn't you, Calvin?"

"You bet. And you said you'd take me fishing and you will, won't you?"

"Yes, unless they pump all the water out of the rivers, and when they do that, we'll wander along the sandy beds and pick up shells."

Calvin clapped his hands. "Pete, the boy in our alley, found a shell and sailed it way over, and he said he'd bet it would hit a policeman."

"I don't know much about the actor's trade, Mr. Howerson," Whateley said, "and know nothing about the actor himself, but if many of them could learn to win the immediate confidence and admiration of so shrewd a

little audience as Calvin, I would advise the average young man to make a study of the profession. I am free to say that I did not inherit the Puritan's prejudice against the actor. I read somewhere that at one time in London it was quite a festival of the church to tie him to the tail-end of a cart and whip him up the hill. Good exercise for over-fed deacons, I should think, eh, Doctor? I suppose my prejudice was reserved for the fiddler, a man almost beyond the law's protection in my old State of North Carolina. Only between religious revivals was he looked on as a man at all, for then he was needed to fiddle at dances when ' Amazing Grace ' was lost to the tune of ' Old Bob Ridley.' The drama is older than the Jews and their religion. Am I not right, Dr. Henshaw? ''

The doctor began to ahem and old Calvin continued: '' But no matter. On more than one occasion Edwin Booth stirred my very soul, and if that wasn't greatness, then there was nothing great in Calhoun or Henry Clay. Ha, I recall when Henry Irving first came to this town, quite a while before he was — er — sirred. A wealthy extractor of cold cream from rancid fat insisted upon giving him a reception, and it was amusing afterward to hear that he had taken that cultivated gentleman *up* into ' our set.' ''

Henshaw was twitching to say something, evidently to Howerson and Whateley combined, but the Poet was listening to Miss Whateley. She said that it must have been fun, sleeping under hedges after the manner of immortal tinkers. If she had been a man, she said, and not provided for, she might have been in olden days a minstrel, but now a tramp, she feared. Her blood was strong like her sinews, her nerves; noting her strength, all must have felt that she spoke the truth of her feelings.

How those eyes could have flared a passion! Howerson withdrew his eyes from her, tore them away, he felt; and gave them to the doctor, ashened of their fire.

The minister was twitching to talk, and bored Harriet was itching to hear him. For her the conversation had been of so low a mental tone that her mind could scarcely hear it. She had stolen the luxury of more than one yawn. Howerson must improve or she could not grant him the brimming measure of her patronage. He might be intellectual but surely he was not thoroughly well bred. He had given her no opportunity to tell him about her ill health, how rare it was that she got three hours' sleep. And as for her poor little appetite — but the doctor had begun to speak.

"My very dear Mr. Whateley, far be it from me to take you to task for your — I shall not say defense, but for your palliation of that mimicry termed an art — begging your pardon, Mr. Howerson. Ahem! Nor is it for me to take issue with you for your pleasantry at the expense of a compounder or extractor of that necessary article, cold cream. But we must not forget, even in the indulgence of our native humor, that America, more than a democracy, is an industry, a trade, so to speak. And if in any manner, in jest or otherwise, we convey to the young the impression that we place a questionable accomplishment above a necessary and creative productiveness, we have borne, as it were, false witness against the spirit of our country."

Whateley nodded, waiting for him to proceed. Harriet, thankful that cold cream rather than fish had been brought forth, looked upon the doctor as true champion of American gentility, and smiled. Rose made a quick swap of sly fun with Howerson; and Henshaw, encouraged by his own frankness, warmed toward greater

liberty. " Of course you do not mean it, my very dear Mr. Whateley, but those less acquainted with your nature — ahem — and your business activity, would suppose that you — I might say — sneer at certain honest occupations. Understand me, I do not mean — "

" I think I understand," Whateley cut him off. " And I don't know but you are right. It is not in me to sneer at a man who earns a dollar. Ha, there are eminent citizens who would like the opportunity to swear that I am none too particular as to how I get a dollar myself. But this is what I do sneer at, Doctor: the *snobbery* of men who get money, by science, art, labor, commerce or theft."

At the word theft the doctor raised his reverent eyes. Old Calvin continued. " It may be what some snobs might call un-American, but I confess respect for inherited money. It shows that there has been thrift in the family, and though our hypocrisy may disclaim it, thrift is the cornerstone of all the virtues."

Hereupon the doctor granted unto himself the luxury of a shock. Howerson looked on and mused, " Our characters are unfolding toward the plot, whatever it may be."

Silent Dan, having figured out a future majority, made excuse of papers waiting his examination, shook good night with the two guests and withdrew, one character of whom not much could be expected, Howerson thought. Freed from the trammel of one unsympathetic ear, as thinking woman often is when her husband quits the scene, Harriet smoothed out the doctor's crimps, received anew the history of the Antwerp enemy, and accepted thankfully for good measure the learned man's recital of a hip-wrench in Liverpool, occasioned by kicking at a vicious dog. Whateley joined in with the contribution

of a rheumatic twinge, and when the doctor arose to take his leave, he taxed his memory to bring back an evening spent in more profit and enjoyment.

When he was gone out into the hall, Harriet following him to the front door, little Calvin ran over to his grandfather and whispered to him. The old man changed countenance, coughed. The boy said, "Please, grandpa," and the old man took him upon his knee, pressed his face close against the little wooer's curly head and replied, "Yes, my son, it shall be so. Rose, my dear, he wants you and Mr. Howerson to go with us into the Cabin. Ah, Mr. Howerson, let me explain."

Then he gave briefly the story of his sanctuary, and simple it was, as if the boy himself had told it. Enraptured with this new phase of Whateley's character, Howerson listened to the poem of the old log cabin in the pine woods. He could hear the hum of the spinning wheel, hear the low murmur of the fire, see the boy gazing into it. He heard the wind moan in the forest, the clatter of the cavalry down the road, the cry of the night hawk. The picture of an old man and an old woman arose in his wind, as strong as a reality; and he heard the old woman pray when the old man had covered the fire and gone to bed.

Howerson looked at Rose, and her eyes were glowing; he looked at old Calvin, and his eyes were shut. And when the tyrant got up to speak to old Paul about the fire in the Cabin, the young woman said in low tones as sweet as a melody half hushed to let us dream: "You can see how sacred it is to him, Mr. Howerson. And you are the first one outside the family who has ever been invited to cross the threshold."

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE REAL STAGE

The soul of the Poet was touched with the spirit of reverence. Into the old log cabin he entered as one who has shaken off his sandals at the door of the temple. He had seen the old man's character change its hue as the sward is changed by shifting shadows. Now it was illumined. Falling upon his countenance, the light from the blazing logs seemed softer. On the wall in a corner, the scoured pots and pans were gleaming. The white pine floor was creamed with age. And what could it be that so perfumed the air? Was it incense of the virgin woods, or was it that the Poet caught the sweet, reminiscent smell of poetry, Ben Jonson's "nard in the fire"?

The savant who said "The drama would be great if there were no actors," could not have had in mind such actors as were come together on this stage of real play. Master by indulgence elsewhere, the boy was master here by right, by imagination, the genius of youth. "What is your boy name?" he asked of Howerson.

"George."

"And grandpa's name is Big Calvin, and I'm Little Calvin, and Aunt Rose's name is Rose. Call her Rose, George."

George looked at her as she sat simple and radiant by the hearth, and called her "Rose," and she laughed, true comedienne of the play; and the "nard in the fire"

sputtered its sweetness on the air. The old man was as much a child as the boy, for the Cabin was not a make-believe but a real past; and as all poets are of the long ago, Howerson helped the illusion; and Big Calvin put his hand on George's knee, and laughed with him.

Now afar off the long roll was beating, and they knew that out in the dark the soldiers startled from sleep were leaping to arms. "The bugle!" cried the boy. "The cavalry is coming!" Down the road the horsemen sped, cutting the air with strips of moonlight, their sabers.

They halted and some of them came and knocked on the door, to search the house; and George met the captain and assured him that no enemy was there. "No one here but just us children," he said; and the cavalry swept on, and the children laughed, for they knew that over in the corner behind the spinning wheel, a Confederate officer was hiding. He was grateful to them for this protection, and when they let him out at the door he called on the Lord to bless them.

At the whim of the boy, when one play was ended another was begun, and in the speeches where exactness was to be most observed, he told each one what to say. The humorous lines he gave out with solemn brow, but when pronounced after him and in appropriate place, he would laugh and clap his hands, truest of all inspiration, unconscious of itself. And when the plays were played, they told tales. The boy would not let them say "stories" for story meant a thing not true. So they told tales while Big Calvin was busy with an ash-cake. The Poet told the story of a boy about the age of Little Calvin, who killed the wolf whose skin was now on Little Calvin's back. This was a delightful tale and the poet had to tell it twice; and then Rose began about a little girl, but the boy did not want it.

" Oh," she said, " but this is about a little girl that was saved from the wolves by a little boy."

" Well tell it, but make the girl part short," he commanded, and Big Calvin turned from his bread-baking to look up with a smile.

" 'Cause if you don't," the boy went on, " Pete in the alley won't like it when I tell it to him. He don't like girls; he calls 'em mutts."

" But you like nice little girls, don't you?" Rose asked of him and he shook his head. " No, not the nice ones, for they are afraid of the dirt. A girl named Kit used to come into our alley, long time ago and rassled with me and Pete, and she was strong and we liked her, for she wasn't afraid of dirt and laughed at mud, and she called Pete a liar just like a boy would; and once she hit him in the nose and when he boxed her jaws she didn't cry. She was good, you bet, but they ruint her."

Ruined her! This was getting to be serious, threatening, in fact, and with an idle remark which seemed to smother the sweetness of the " nard in the in fire," a change of subject was essayed. George spoke of another wolf, but a wolf dragged in is not a good wolf, and the boy would have none of him. Big Calvin was wiser, had more confidence in the morals of the alley, and he looked up and inquired, " How did they ruin her?"

And the boy answered: " Why, somebody gave her some clean dresses, a pink one and a blue one, and then she was afraid of the dirt and turned up her nose at us and called us horrid, and went over in a lot to play with a boy that had on a pink sash like her dress; and Pete said he could whip that boy, and he did; and I could'er whipped him too, but I wouldn't whip a boy that had just been whipped. Would you, George?"

George said he would not, and Big Calvin shook his

head and declared that none but a coward would do such a thing. "Eh, what is it?" he inquired of old Paul who, having entered unperceived, was now standing on the edge of the hearth.

"You must pardon me, sir, but I couldn't get out of it. He said it was so important he must see you, sir — as much as swore he would camp here till you came back. I don't think I go too far in saying that *camp* was his very word, sir; but I tried my best to put him out, with words, for you must know that I am an old man, having been forced out of the wheat pit and then back from the curb years ago. He — "

The character of Big Calvin fell off like a cloak, and Whateley stood there, dazing with fearful eye the old butler's countenance.

"What — what the devil do you mean? You slobbering old idiot, haven't I told you a hundred times that you are never to interrupt me here with anything from the outside? Out with you!"

"Oh, no, father," Rose protested, and she stood up close against old Whateley — old Whateley now sure enough. She took his arm and put it about her neck, like a boa. "Be patient, father. His offense is great, but he is old. Hear what he has to say. What is it, Paul?"

"You see, Miss Rose, and you, Mr. Whateley, I couldn't help myself, for he walked right by me into the library. He said they were fighting at the coal mines in Missouri — five men shot to-day. He is a newspaper reporter — "

"Go and tell him it's none of his infernal business. Out with you."

"Ah, wait a moment, if you please, Mr. Whateley. Let me see him," Howerson requested.

"Yes — yes, I thank you. I leave it to you — yes. You will know what to say. Yes."

Rose took her arm from about her father's neck. "I am going too," she said. "We will make — I was going to say, a lark of it, George — "

His name on her lips, not in play, thrilled him. "I beg your pardon — Mr. Howerson. But come on. I am going with you. I might make it easier."

"You will make it delightful," he replied.

A young man wearing rimless glasses and with a university countenance, walked slowly about in the library, halting to look at the title of a book, glancing at his watch, listening. It has been charged that the universityite does not do well except along lines strictly professional, that the refinement of the classics robs one of a persistent force thought to be inherently American. Old Horace Greeley believed that the best reporters came up with haphazard reading from the street, but the "push" of to-day's college output might cause old Horace to change his view.

The reporter turned about, bowed, and sat down when Howerson gestured toward a chair. He looked at Rose, at Howerson, both of whom had sat down for a visit.

"I beg your pardon, but I wish to see Mr. Whateley."

"Yes," said Howerson, "so we learned from the butler. But Mr. Whateley is not in town. He is at this moment in North Carolina."

"Why, the butler at first denied and then acknowledged that Mr. Whateley was at home."

"No doubt. But the butler is a very old man and needed rest."

"I beg your pardon. Needed rest, you say? "

"Yes, from the 'third degree' to which you were subjecting him. He confessed to obtain relief."

"Oh, I see. And may I ask as to who you are?"

"With perfect freedom. I am John Cahoon, Mr. Whateley's private secretary and adviser by stealth."

"I must confess that I don't quite understand that position. Adviser by stealth, did you say?"

"Yes, advise him to sleep when he is sleeping."

"I see. But on an occasion so serious as this, secretaries are usually less humorous. Beg pardon, but may I ask who this young lady is?"

"My sister Jane, Mr. Whateley's confidential stenographer."

They saw the reporter blink behind his glasses. He bowed to Jane. "You very much resemble a picture of Miss Whateley;" he said.

"Do you hear that, John?" Jane cried. "He has noticed it too. Our minister spoke of it this afternoon and then asked me to auction off autographed books at the Church Fair. John, dear, get the gentleman a cigar."

"No, thank you. I am more liberal than even your minister. I don't charge anything for discovering so clear a resemblance. And I am grateful for pleasantry, but I have been sent to ask several questions, Mr. — Cahoon, did you say?"

"Yes, John Cahoon, late of the Chair of Agricultural Economy, of the University of Sand Point, Idaho."

"A worthy chair that no doubt was amply filled, Mr. Cahoon. It is not, however, of Idaho but of Missouri that I wish to talk. Mr. Whateley recently closed down his coal mines at Rockdale, on account of a strike among the men."

"Yes, a man has a right to shut up his shop."

"Those of the mine in favor of the strike and those

opposed are now at open war, and five of them were shot to-day."

"Possibly. But that is the state's lookout. Mr. Whateley is not a justice of the peace. I suppose you know why the question of a strike came up?" Howerson did not know; he wanted to find out.

"Yes, on account of the dismissal of a man."

"Of course, and not on account of wages. They came forward with their bullying methods. Mr. Whateley listened patiently, and then he told them that he must be permitted to run his own business in his own way. And I suppose you know that this is regarded as the most brutal remark that a man can make. 'What, run his own business in his own way! He deserves to die. Let us blow up his house!' I suppose you know why that man — now, what is his name? It was on the end of my tongue this minute."

"Codowski," said the reporter.

"Codowski. And I suppose you know why Codowski was discharged."

"Well, Mr. Whateley's superintendent out there says that he was lazy and incompetent. The men say it was because he expressed his opinions."

"Ah, left off work to talk. Now, we employ men and pay them good wages. What for? To express opinions? No, to work. We can form our own opinions, and when we need assistance we can turn to the newspapers. Just as soon as these men agree to let us operate our business in our own way, they may go back to work, but until they do, the mines will remain closed. You say the men are now fighting on account of a dissention among themselves. This shows that we have not tried to supplant them with men from the outside. I think, sir,

the man to interview in this instance is not Mr. Whateley, but the sheriff of the county. I have given you Mr. Whateley's views."

The reporter looked about for his hat, found it; and Howerson went with him to the door. He expected Rose to join him in the hallway, to go with him to the Cabin, but she did not follow him; and he returned to the library, glad of the chance to talk to her alone. As he resumed his seat she looked up with a smile and said:

"We are fellow conspirators in a fraud."

"Pals," he replied.

This notion so pleased them that they laughed like true companions. The companionship of idea may be close, but not so close as that of laughter. "Oh, I care not what you believe," said a philosopher, "but if your soul can laugh with mine own, I then shall know that we are friends." They laughed, the bubbling of physical natures pleased one with the other. They did not seek for bright sayings, for wit, but laughed with the chumminess of kindred nerves.

"Do you suppose he really knew we were stringing him?" she said.

"Oh, yes. And so does the fish, but he's strung just the same."

"It will amuse father very much."

"I don't know. Wait till he sees the interview."

"But you didn't say anything — I mean anything to give offense."

"I don't know about that, either; but almost anything can be written into offense."

"I have often thought that I should like to go about and gather up news," she said, and looked as if she meant it.

" Most women prefer the stage," he replied. " How is it that you don't? "

" Because I would rather write lines of my own than to have them set down for me, like a copy book. Some time ago I wrote some letters from Montana — went with a woman who had mining interests out there — just us two. I didn't go as Calvin Whateley's daughter. I think my name was Jane — I'm sure it was. How did you come to guess it just now? But it was not Jane Cahoon, your sister, but Jane Barnes. Father said that in my letters to a newspaper I developed a socialistic tendency. You know a great many people do. It seems to be the easiest way to write. Father laughed, for none of our friends knew. He said, ' I guess, my daughter, there is a good deal of the squaw about you.' And I couldn't help thinking he was right. Sister Harriet was dreadfully shocked; she always is. She ran to Dr. Henshaw and begged him not to say a word about it, as if he could have known anything about it unless she had told him. With great effort he restrained himself from tears; and when I came home he told me that I was a bird of plumage, pecking at the foundation stones of society. When greatly wrought up his figures of speech are not always happily chosen. . . . Were you ever in Montana? "

" Well, hardly. Once I was headed in that direction, but our ghost was taken with rheumatism and couldn't hobble. So we walked for him, back to our starting point. Tell me about your letters."

" Oh, they were weak enough compared with the scenes that inspired them; and when I read them over, all together, I burnt them. And now I remember only the pleasure of writing them."

"Inspiration's only reward," he said.

"Indiscretion's only protection," she laughed. "Shall we go back to the Cabin?"

"Yes. I had forgotten it."

They went out into the hall. "Does your father go into the sanctuary every night?"

"No. Sometimes not for weeks. The soul has its humors."

"The soul is a Homer that nods. It is not always sublime."

Silently they opened the Cabin door. The old man was sitting in his hickory rocking chair, the boy in his lap, both asleep. Rose and Howerson tiptoed out of the room. "I wanted only to bid them good night," said the Poet. "I must go."

She went with him to the front door and held forth her hand. "Good night, pal," she said.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHUCKLED OVER IT

Whateley sometimes broke fast at an hour so early that none save his daughter joined him. At such times he would tap lightly on her door, and nearly always found her with a book in her hand. But on the morning after Howerson's visit he met her in the hall, reading a newspaper. Never before had he detected in her so sharp a zest for news, and he spoke of it laughingly, with his arm about her, walking toward the dining room. She told about the interview, the trick that had been played, and the old man chuckled as he sat down. She read to him the expanded statement of "Mr. Whateley's representative, John Cahoon, a man so remote in nature, education and experience from the laboring classes as to have no understanding of them." In the heavy-headed column there was no hint of the thread on which John and Jane had thought to "string" the interviewer. His mission was serious and his work was solemn. Whateley listened.

"Good," he said. "It's exactly what I would have told him. But how did Howerson happen to know so much? I didn't discuss it with him."

"He found out from the reporter — stole it, you might say. It was the shrewdest play I ever saw," and she believed it was. In her natural partiality she did not place true estimate on the reporter's art; she did not see it hidden slyly in the sketch.

"That's what I call rare judgment," said the old man. "It is not possessed by more than one man in ten thousand."

He was too ready to join in with her view. It robbed her of argument, stripped off the adornment of the advocate. "And yet your own judgment didn't select him. He was chosen through Calvin's inexperienced eyes. Still we are told that man is governed by reason. There wasn't any reason in your selection, was there?"

She laughed at him and he laughed at himself. "No, I can't say there was. But you must acknowledge that I might have seen something in the man myself. I have some little penetration into character, you know."

"Oh, wonderful," she cried. "Sometimes you are a wizard. You have made fewer mistakes than any man anywhere."

"But I might have been mistaken in Mr. Howerson, eh?"

"Might have made a mistake in choosing him with the eyes of a boy."

"Why, I thought you liked him."

"I do; very much. And when we like a man we say he's different — different from what? Well, different from men we don't like. But really, father, don't you think many a failure, if given the proper chance, would be a success?"

"Possibly. But whose duty is it to go around seeking out proper chances for previous failures? Not mine. Now, I am of the opinion, as you must have gathered long before this, that a man is to be or is not to be a success. Never mind how; predestination has nothing to do with it. Providence — Nature doesn't give a rap. But Nature or something selects, and there you are. That's all been threshed over thousands of times. But

I'll tell you something that hasn't. It's this: Some men have too much judgment."

"I don't see how that can be."

"Perhaps not," he replied. "But some men have so much judgment that it amounts to fear. I've had men working for me that became so careful of my interest as to hurt that same interest by over-nursing. Many a fellow has coddled a job to death. Howerson doesn't do that. He takes a risky chance. Where some men might feel their way along, he leaps. Of course this won't do with all men, but when you find one that it will do with, why then you have found a winner sure enough."

"Yes," she agreed, "but experiment is rather dangerous; and how are you to know without a trial? You remember we read Montaigne together; and I remember he declared his ability but acknowledged that his success had been hampered by want of luck. Then why not say that the whole scheme of life is largely luck, and that as a boy is lucky — that he wasn't a girl — why not let him employ men for your important offices?" She was laughing at him.

"Leave it to such boys as Calvin? Yes," he said. "Hah, but were you unlucky to find yourself a girl?"

"I was lucky to find myself your daughter, you dear old tenderness."

Now his laugh was loud. Tenderness! In the street his heart was a joke and he knew it, humored it grimly along. And it was grimness that now laughed out so loud. Foreseeing a day of worry and struggle, he had arisen early to be fresh and strong in grappling with it. He pointed to the interview. "Bad business, Rose. There'll be widows and orphans out there before it's over with."

"But can't something be done to stop it? For the

sake of peace why not yield a point and reinstate Codowski?"

Old Calvin shook his head. "That wouldn't mean peace, for they have forgotten him and are fighting among themselves." Then, clearing his throat with a sound like the grating of a harsh and heavy hinge, he looked at her and said: "But if I knew that taking Codowski back would bring peace and eternal prosperity I wouldn't do it. And if I knew that my not taking him back would result in the death of a hundred men, I wouldn't do it. My scheme of life and business may be all wrong, but I enter into no compromise that calls my principles into question."

"But come now, dad, isn't it in your nature ever to forgive?"

"In my nature to forgive as Nature forgives — just about. Nature doesn't stop a snowstorm because a man has pawned his overcoat."

"True enough, dad; but the man may have pawned his overcoat to keep from starving."

"But it snows just the same," he said.

"Yes, snows just the same when little children are cold and hungry. And among those miners' children there are boys like Calvin, and these boys have grandfathers who are working out their long sentence of sorrow."

"Eh?"

"Yes, loving old grandfathers who live in cabins but who don't know how to play in them."

"Eh? But they know how to sit about their fires and talk sedition against their own interests and mine. Bad business. . . . And of course subscriptions will be taken up for their relief."

"Yes, father."

"Hum! And I want you, in the most sneaking and underhand way, to see that I give more than all the rest of the public put together. Don't! Quit, I tell you."

Now she was behind his chair with her arms about his neck. "Dear tender-hearted dad!"

"Quit it. But if you let anyone find it out, I'll marry you to old Henshaw."

"Oh, good, and like the ancient pedant we could keep a school in a church, and we'd buy us a sad little melodeon, and you could come to see us in our cottage at night, and sing hymns with us."

"Dreadful picture. . . . But I must run along now."

She ran along with him, as he termed it, out to the big gate where at the step the car was waiting. "Now be very good to-day," she said, and kissed him.

At the office there were worries in thick plenty waiting for him, their bulk puffing out the early mail. Money has nerves to be racked, but money has also muscles wherewith to be strong and to fight; and old Calvin squared himself for combat.

One of the earliest callers was the mayor of the Missouri mining town. He said that the strike must be settled. Whateley gave him a long look. "Oh, I see, and you want to go to Congress on the strength of settling it. Well, what's your plan?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but I didn't say I wanted to go to Congress."

"Oh, I thought you did. But perhaps it was your manner that did the talking. You are one of these reformers, I take it. They come up like mullen stalks in

your state, I believe, but go to seed somewhat earlier. Hum. . . . Is there anything else you wished to say?"

"Anything else I wish to say! I haven't said anything yet, sir."

"Ah, quite true. But would you mind giving me some idea as to what you intend to say?"

"I will indeed; and when you permit me, sir, I will tell you that this outrageous state of affairs must be done away with."

"I see," said old Calvin, and then he called out, "Jim!" The retired aspirant for honors of the prize ring appeared in the door. "Jim, this unfortunate gentleman has had a stroke. He has lost his memory. He has forgotten the way to the elevator. Show him, please."

In a moment the mayor's shoulder was beneath Jim's mighty clutch. The politician shrugged and scuffled to explain, but Jim picked him up, turned him about and trotted him out into the corridor.

At night when old Calvin went home he declared to his daughter that during all the day he had been as softly spoken and as gentle as the blind fiddler who, on the corner, had drawn out his pleading strains.

For little Calvin it had been a busy day, begun in eagerness to steal forth from beneath the eye of delegated authority, to strut wolf-clad in the envious gaze of Alley Pete, and ending in the virtuous lamentations of Harriet, his mother. About the house he had played for a long time, humming the tune of obedience, his wolf coat hidden in a corner of the yard. He told the nurse that he would go upstairs where he could be quiet, and he hummed up the stairway and she heard him shut the door of his room. But she did not hear

him open it, did not see him sneaking down the stairs, out of the hall, into the yard. Dodging about in the shrubbery he got his coat and hid himself near a small gate opening out upon a side street; and there he awaited opportunity, for the gate, though small, was heavy, and he could not open it. He heard Pete's cry but was afraid to answer. It was long past the milkman's time; it was time for the grocer's boy, but it seemed that he would never come. The March air was cold, and now his bristled coat was true servant to his need. Peeping out he saw the nurse come down the rear stair into the yard, watched her spread a handkerchief upon a bush to dry, heard her sing a plaintive coster song. She came toward him and his heart beat fast, for he knew that she stole sometimes to the gate to talk with the policeman. But someone called her at a moment most precious to the boy, and turning about she left him there to wait. The gate latch clicked: the grocer's freckled scout; and the boy leaped from the thicket.

"Wait, don't shut the gate. I want to go out."

"Ho, you mean you want to sneak out. I know you, kiddo. And I could get paid for givin' you away in yonder." He shut the gate and planted himself in Calvin's path.

"Let me out, please; and if you don't tell on me I'll give you a whole lot of money when my grandfather comes home."

"Ho, heap o' money you'll git from the likes o' him. That woman in yonder would give me a quarter. About how much you think you can git from the old guy?"

"Don't you call him a guy or I'll hit you."

"Well, the old man, then. How much?"

"Two quarters."

"Come off."

"Two quarters, and I'll give 'em to you when you come to-morrow."

"Cross your heart an' hope to die?"

"See?" he crossed himself. "And I hope to die."

"All right, you can go out, but if you ditch me, the devil will come in the night an' take you away on his horns. He took my brother away 'bout your size an' looked like you, an' he ain't come back, an' sometimes in the night if we listen close we can hear him hollerin', an' it's awful. Do you believe me?"

"Yes."

"Then go on, but don't you forgit."

He opened the gate and Calvin ran out. Pete was walking up and down the alley, his hands deep in his pockets. When he saw Calvin he cried aloud his astonishment and could not conceal his admiration. He stroked reverently the wolf's bristles; he whistled, and in terms not to be found in the picture book he swore that he had never before set eyes on anything so wondrous fine. But then within him arose the critic, resentful of his own unstinted praise. "Oh, yes, it's putty good, but you ought to seen a coat my brother had, made out of a lion's skin, an' wolves ain't nothing to lions. One lion can whip as many wolves as can git round him. Lions don't pay no 'tention to wolves. They don't know they're there till they git sorter hungry-like an' want to eat a few of 'em. When I first seen this 'ere coat I thought it was a lion."

"You're a liar," Calvin cried, and struck him. And Pete landed a fist on Calvin's nose and seized him to throw him down. Just at this moment the nurse's policeman ran into the alley and seizing Pete, was dragging

him away, when Calvin cried out: " You let him alone. He didn't do anything."

" He didn't, eh? Didn't he hit you on the nose? Come on here, you beastly ruffian, you."

" No, he didn't hit me."

" Then what made your nose bleed? "

" I fell down," said Calvin. " Turn him loose."

" Huh, then what made him grab you? "

" He took hold of me to wipe off the blood. Turn him loose."

The policeman released Pete. Calvin had aroused the admiration of his Celtic nature. " Young laddiebuck," he said, " you're as true a piece of grit as I ever saw, and a month's salary against a tin whistle your people came from the Old Sod." With this he walked off, swinging his club.

Calvin had no handkerchief, and Pete tore his own shirt to wipe away the blood. " Some folks say lion skins are better'n wolf, but they ain't," he said. " Oh, a lion *may* whip a wolf. It's a lion's business to fight. It's a wolf's business to furnish coats. An' this is the puttiest one I ever seen. Does it hurt much? "

" No. I — I think it would 'a' bled anyway."

" I'm awful sorry, Cal. Do you know what I've got? A policeman's club, an' I only play with it on Sunday. But I'm goin' to give it to you."

" No, you keep it till you die and then you can leave it to me. Do you like me, Pete? "

" Like you, why I'd fight my sister for you. I — "

But Pete wheeled about and took to his nimble heels. The nurse had pounced upon Calvin.

CHAPTER XIX.

BUT GOD SAID THERE WAS A DEVIL

The incident of the alley, virtue shining through falsehood, was as important to old Calvin when from the policeman he heard of it, as any piece of news that had come to him within a month. When the youngster drew on him for money to meet the grocer boy's levy, the old man said:

"Ah, I guess this must be for the Sunday school."

He shot a shrewd glance into the eye of the youngster and waited. The boy shook his head.

"Oh, for the Orphan's Home, then?"

The boy's ringlets danced about his brow.

"Then what's it for? Truth now. Always truth with me, understand. Truth, Calvin."

Calvin told the story. The old man frowned. "Scared you with the devil, eh? Haven't I told you there isn't any devil?"

"Yes, gran'pa, but you said there was a God and God said there was a devil."

"Eh? But God didn't mean it as — as they would have you think. They slandered God. You believe me. There is no devil and no hell."

They were in the library, and though they had not perceived her, Harriet was standing near. Now she came forward, her countenance aghast. "Father, father, how can you say such things to him! Calvin, you believe as I tell you. Remember I am your mother, and nearly every great man has declared that his moth-

er's religion was good enough for him. There is both a God and a devil, Calvin."

"Sit down," said the old man. She did not. To sit down would have meant to reason. Standing, she had delivered a decision from which appeal would be futile. But she waited. "Good," said old Calvin, the boy standing between his knees. "But if every man had always found his mother's religion good enough for him, every man would still be worshipping a mud god."

"Well I don't care whether that's true or not," she declared, "but I do know that it is necessary for children to believe in the devil. Dr. Henshaw says a belief in the devil is essential for most people; otherwise we'd have anarchy."

"Hum! Then society is more indebted to the devil than to God. Calvin, you take this fifty-cent piece and give it to the boy, and you tell him you give it not because you are afraid of the devil, but because you are afraid to deceive yourself by not keeping your word."

Harriet protested. "He ought not to be allowed to give it to him. He is simply paying a scoundrel for being a scoundrel."

The old man laughed. "Well, but don't we educate men and then pay 'em for scaring us with the devil? Calvin you pay that boy and thank him for the confidence he had in you, and tell him that when you get big enough you'll thrash him; and mind that you keep your word with him in that, too."

That some ill luck must fall upon such irreverence, the boy's mother knew full well. Her religion was the belief that the narrowest interpretation of the Book would bring prosperity. Her father was devout, and had he not been able to feed great multitudes, not indeed

with loaves, but with fishes? At Dan's wife and her belief, Rose was pagan enough to smile. But as a final play, Harriet had a card to trump Miss Rose the pagan, a scheme to bead the old man's brow with the sweat of fear. This play was the stronger because it was made but rarely: "I will take my child and live apart from you." This made old Calvin play hypocrite to her views. With it she could have led him to the mourners' bench; and salting the slab with his eyes, he would have swallowed Jonah and the whale. At times the poor old tyrant was an abject slave. He did not know that with a few words he could have iced Harriet's blood. But Rose knew it, and one morning at early breakfast she said to him:

"Tell her to take him."

"Merciful Lord, no."

"And that you'll cut the cloth of your will accordingly."

"Eh? Do you think so? Would that fetch her?"

"To her knees. I know. She used to scare me, on your account, but I gave her a hint yesterday and she turned pale."

"Ah, I'll send for her at once."

"Oh, no, let it come about naturally."

"Yes. Perhaps it would be better. Why didn't I think of it? I must be losing my shrewdness. Can it be that age is turning my edge?"

She laughed, reached over and pressed his hand, unconscious of age, iron in strength. "No, it was because it was not in your heart to threaten Calvin's inheritance even though you didn't mean it."

"You are right," he agreed. "Yes. Affection while it makes us think, keeps us also from thinking. But I will threaten. I won't let her dwarf his soul. His mind

must be free. Ha, a new advantage. It does me good." He laughed.

"How is the Missouri strike?" she inquired. "The dispatches don't tell much."

"About the same," he answered. "Continuous threat, with serious trouble likely at any moment. I am going to send Howerson out there. Oh, I haven't told you about his Louisiana transactions. Well, he bought the sugar plantation for fifteen thousand dollars less than I had agreed to pay — found that the heir of the estate was in need of ready money and discovered a strip of marsh that lowered the valuation. The old house, he says in his letter, is beautiful, French chateau, decorated in 1840 by artists from Paris. His letter made me proud that I owned it. When I was a boy, to own a sugar plantation was to be a king. . . . But there came a telegraphic night letter. Here it is." He read: "'Have offer of seventy-five thousand above purchase price. To make plantation yield profit must be on ground. Not desirable as nonresident investment. Experience required. Shall I sell?' Ha, I telegraphed him to sell. He did so, turning the strip of marsh land to our advantage — showed that tiling would reclaim it, and being virgin soil, render it the most fertile field in the entire tract. Wish I'd brought his letters home with me. You know he said he had received no business training. Hum! But his letters prove his statement too modest. The most concise and expressive bits of writing I ever saw. Thoroughly business-like."

"But speaking of business letters," she said, "do you think that as a rule they are models of conciseness and expression? Business dictates its letters and business likes to hear the sound of its own voice, loves adjectives. 'Replying to your favor of the tenth instant, we

beg to state.' They never 'say' a thing. They always 'state'—'beg to state.' Perhaps Mr. Howerson's letters were so simple as to be literary."

"Maybe so," the old man smiled. "I'll let him put some of his 'literary' down on that strike."

His first attention to business that day was to send a telegram to Howerson. Then he closed a transaction for the immediate establishment of a barbed wire mill at Glenwich.

In a lull Jim came in with the card of "the Rev. Andrew Von Veigel."

"What about him? I don't know him. Beggar, of course."

"He may be, sir," said Jim. "But he says he's Mr. Howerson's uncle."

"That so? Let him come in."

Whateley looked down on a parchment spread on his desk, and then looking up he met the quiet and speculative eyes of Professor Hudsic. Old Calvin swiftly measured him, gathering in one quick glance his long black coat, and the silk hat held deferentially in his right hand. Whateley motioned toward a chair, bade him sit down.

"So you are Mr. Howerson's uncle."

"Yes, may it please you, sir. Years ago, in Japan, I met Miss — ah — Clarissa Howerson, sister of George Howerson's father. She was in missionary work; so was I. Our interests drew us together and we were married."

"I see," said old Calvin, sniffing faintly a suspicious rat. "And she's dead now, eh?"

"Oh, no, the dear soul has just arrived with me from abroad, and we wish to give George a surprise."

As old Calvin looked at him and listened to him, he

mused, " This fellow may in some way be connected with that strike." The professor smiled.

" Yes, I understand," said old Calvin. " How did you know he was connected with my establishment, if you have just arrived? "

" Hah, yes, a pertinent question, Mr. Whateley, and one which you ask naturally. We — er — my wife and I stopped at Glenwich, having property interests in that place, and learned there that he was in your employ. And now, sir, will you be so kind as to tell me where we may find him? "

" He is not in town. Is there anything else you wish to see me about? "

The professor coughed. " Of course it does not mean much to you, with so many things on your mind, but to his aunt and to me it is a matter of sentimental moment. Therefore, would you mind informing me as to what part of the country he is in at present and as to when you expect him to return? "

If men could not look truth when they lie there would be no business and no treaties among nations. Old Calvin looked truth and said: " He has gone to South America to look after a rubber plantation, and I don't know as to when I may recall him. Good day."

The professor rose, lingering for a moment, rubbing his hat with his elbow. " I take my leave, sir," he said.

Not far away, at the opening of an alley, a woman waited, and when the professor came along she stepped forth eagerly to join him. With a look he enjoined her not to speak, and in silence they walked a long distance, crossed over the river and entered a small restaurant through a grimy doorway leading to grimy tables. Here they sat down. Before speaking she took off her

hat and gloves and put them on a chair beside her, Hudsic sitting opposite. Then she said, "Well?"

"Let us order a bite to eat, first," he replied; and when the waiter had served them with spaghetti, she leaned her elbows on the table and looked hard into the eyes of her companion. "Well, where is he?"

"In South America."

"Hudsic, what a poor, miserable old fool you are. He lied to you."

"I wonder if he did."

"Wonder! Of course you do. You've got just about sense enough. You bungled. He suspected something and lied you out of the house. How did you do it?"

"As we agreed upon. But what cause have you to believe he lied?"

"Your face."

Hudsic sat back in his chair and looked at her. She wormed spaghetti about a fork and dismissed him from her mind. He pondered, sitting back, pulling at his beard. "Yes, I must have failed," he sighed.

"This is very good spaghetti," she said. "It was not made by weaklings but by people that know how to achieve. When they decide a man must die, he dies. The law frowns but the man is dead. But we, better educated and deeply read in the great book of justice — we fail. Why do you not eat? Do you not like spaghetti?"

"Annie, have some little consideration. I failed, yes; but often men have failed. Annie, you don't know that old timber wolf's eye."

"And with it he tricked your countenance. You let him blister your face and draw out the inflammation. What did you say? But no matter what you said. It was what you looked."

"Then why didn't you go as his sister?"

"Now you drivel. I go — I the photograph in the family album of their fear?"

"True enough. They know you. But why didn't you agree to let me kill him? I could have done it."

She dropped her fork, tossed back her head and laughed.

"You kill him! Hudsic you could not have touched him with your little finger."

He glowered upon her. "Who killed Tovowsky in Moscow?"

She softened toward him; with a purr she catted her graces at him. "Yes, Hudsic, I know. Forgive me, please. But Whateley must live till the traitor is dead. And if he is not here now, he will be before long."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because by this time the fool is caught."

"I don't understand. Caught?"

"He is in love."

"Ah! But how do you know that?"

"Because I have seen *her* — the Whateley woman. That will make his death more bitter to him and sweeter to us. He will be found hanging — suicide — with his confession in his pocket. It will be written by Henk, the wondrous scribe. We will watch for him, kidnap him. We will taunt him with Cupid. It will all be worked out. I snatched him from death. Now I demand back my present — his life. Ah, now your appetite returns to you. This spaghetti is delicious."

CHAPTER XX.

A LITTLE PLAY

It was late in the night when Howerson arrived at the mining town. Up and down the station platform a soldier strode. The bayonets of the militia had come to gleam for the law an interpretive and persuasive light. In an old bus that threatened to shake apart its gouty joints, the envoy of peace was hauled up to the Waldorf Hotel, late the Commercial House, wherein was quartered the superintendent of the mines, John Wherry, at this hour asleep. The night clerk, a poor, old down-and-outer who papped and coddled his job, said that Mr. Wherry could not be seen before morning.

"What medicine has he taken to render him invisible?"

The clerk begged pardon. He had not quite caught the gentleman's meaning. Would he come again? He did.

"Here, take this card, wake Mr. Sleeper and give it to him. He will understand."

"That may be, sir, but I don't."

"Perhaps not. And I don't know that it's essential you should. If you don't let him know that I'm here he will go out of your hotel to-morrow morning and not come back."

The clerk reflected, suckled his job, yielded, and up the stairs complained his way. He came down faster. Mr. Wherry would see the gentleman.

The superintendent was so enormously fat that when

he got out of bed he appeared to take up the remaining space of his room. After a few moments' talk with him it was found that he was no more inclined toward pleasantry than a hippopotamus is disposed to caper to a rag-time melody; and a fat man who has not jollity is an adipose hypocrite.

"A very serious business, Mr. Howerson," said Wherry, crushing his bed on which he now sat. "Exceedingly serious," he added, giving to his night-shirt a dangerous strain.

"Yes," Howerson agreed, "and so is a musical comedy. And what makes the tuneless comedy so serious? The comedian. What adds to the seriousness of the comedy here? The broad landscape of your melancholy countenance. Turn up your light, brighten. Laugh, and then the men will see that it is more serious with them than with you."

"Laugh! My Lord, man, the militia is on the ground. Laugh, when there are new graves out on the hill? Laugh when I hear the soldiers cocking their guns?"

"That's pretty good, Mr. Wherry. You've got in you the poetry of despair. Not the best poetry but better than none at all, perhaps. Now as to the tenants of those new graves: Were they married men?"

"Fortunately not."

"Then laugh because they were fortunate."

"Mr. Howerson, my information from Mr. Whateley is that you are to act on your own judgment, but in all due respect to you and to Mr. Whateley's apparent confidence in you, I must say your judgment is peculiar, waking a man at one in the morning and commanding him to laugh."

"Better than to wake him at half past twelve and command him to weep. As you are now wide awake,

I'll rehearse with you a little play I have constructed."

"Play!"

"A comedy. But please don't interrupt me. Business, like fiction, is a plot, a story. The characters in our story are involved. We must straighten them out. A happy phrase, an epigram, may save us."

"I beg your pardon," said the fat man, the unbolstered tallow of his jaws hanging low, "but did you consult personally with Mr. Whateley just before you came away, and are you yourself quite certain you're in your right mind. Business —"

Howerson broke in upon him. With honed, stropped and edge-tried keenness he enjoyed this absurd drama in the blinking morn. "Business I tell you is a plot and when in its right mind loses sauce as poetry loses Attic salt."

Much flesh regards itself as sane. The fat man now was convinced of Howerson's insanity; yet it might be wise for a short time to humor a ridiculous fancy. "All right, then, Mr. Howerson. Draw your plot."

"Thank you, but I must first ask a few questions. Is Codowsky, the trouble-maker, still here?"

"Yes, the scoundrel, and but for him the men would return to work willingly enough. Half of them are anxious to return. But the other half, the Codowsky half, want trouble."

"I understand that you pay a little more than the union scale."

"Yes. The question of wages doesn't enter into the discussion."

"All right. Along about noon I'll meet the leaders of the two factions, not as a Whateley representative but as an agent from a Pennsylvania company that will buy the mines in case I can induce the men to go back to

work. I will agree for my company to reinstate Codowsky, but will cut down wages to the union scale. About this time you are announced. I insist on your coming in. You are made acquainted with my proposition. You haven't much to say; you are sullen. But you don't see why the Pennsylvania company should cut down the scale. It would be unfair to the men. I remind you that we should be meeting all the demands of the union.

"Just about now a boy arrives with a note for you. You read it and change countenance — if you can. Then you read the note aloud. It says: 'To My Friends: I acknowledge that I was neglecting my duties. They were right in discharging me. I am no longer interested in the outcome here. I am off for other parts.' Signed, 'Codowsky.' Do you catch it? The men would rather work under the old scale. With drum and fife the state's soldiers march down to the train. Women rejoice over back fences and children sing in the street. The strike is settled."

Howerson waited. The superintendent mused for a time and then said: "Yes, fine plot, if it could be carried out."

"Ah, therein always arises a question. Over all the plots in history men have wondered; but if they had done nothing but wonder, the plots would have failed. I think this one can be carried out. Let's rehearse it again."

After rehearsing more than thrice the brief play, this mime to rough it with a ruffian and then to make all things smooth, Howerson measured off by alarm clock three hours of sleep. He arose while yet the bell was ringing and went forth to familiarize himself with exits, entrances, and to induce the engagement of Codowsky, the "heavy." Often in business life but rarely on

the stage is the " heavy " a family man. But more rarely is the stirrer-up of labor strife a man whose heart has formed a home and for whom, in gathering dusk, soft eyes look tenderly. Codowsky was found at his boarding house, in a room where the smell of stale liquor searched nook and corner to throttle the air. Howerson, assuming a privilege, raised a window. Codowsky, who with no welcome in his voice had bade him enter, looked on with a frown. But he could speak English, and this was an encouragement, exposing his mind to persuasion and attack.

" I suppose you are getting tired of this place and are about ready to leave here."

" Naw," said Codowsky. " Who says I tired? "

" No one, but I thought you must be, since no good to yourself nor to anyone else can come from your staying here. Have you thought of it in that way? "

The trouble-maker shook his brutish head, and upon the questioner's countenance fixed his rusty eyes in sullen gaze. The Poet smiled as if encouraging a maiden's timid glance. Codowsky blinked, and the Poet fancied that he could hear his eyes grating in their rust.

" What you come for? " Codowsky asked.

" To talk with you — to tell you something." Howerson looked at his watch. "To tell you that a train will leave here within forty-eight minutes."

Codowsky snarled, like a dog who, gathering up his anger, raises his bristles and his lip. " What is that to me? I stay here. You go out now."

" Yes, in a few minutes. But what I have to say might interest you. The soldiers have to stay until the strike is settled. They have orders to shoot. They will. About half of the men are against you. When the

shooting begins, guns will be aimed at you. That does not scare you. You are brave. But mark this: The owner of the mines will never take you back. The state and the soldiers will stand behind him. Who am I? A lover of truth. How do I treat truth? I give it money. I would give no man a penny to tell a lie, but I pay him to tell truth. We have not much time to lose. You sign this and I will give you two hundred dollars and go with you to the train. Let me read it to you."

Howerson read the words outlined in rehearsal with Wherry. Codowsky leaned over, resting his arms on a table. Howerson looked at his watch, said that the offer would hold good for ten minutes, no longer.

"Within a few days you will be forced to go with no pay for telling truth." He counted out ten twenty-dollar gold pieces. The light fell upon them. He took out a fountain pen, tried it on his thumb nail. The paper lay beside the gold. He touched Codowsky's hand with the pen.

"Ah, I see. You can't sign your name.

"I can."

"Good. Five minutes. Gold for truth. Then, liberty."

"I hate them all," Codowsky growled. "They care if I starve? No. I sign."

Howerson hastened with him to the station, saw him buy a ticket for St. Louis. "With all the trickery of the stage," the actor mused as he got into the old bus to be shaken back up town. "The holding of the watch on him, tempting him to it with the glow of gold — all as ancient as a tallow dip."

As representative of the Pennsylvania company, Howerson had communicated with the heads of the Department of Antagonism, requesting a meeting, noontime, in

the "parlors of the Waldorf." On arriving at the hotel, the day clerk, as young and impertinent as the night clerk was old and deferential, informed him that four of "them mining guys" were waiting, "in there" he directed, pointing. Howerson inclosed a slip of paper in an envelope already addressed, and handed it to the clerk.

"Mr. Wherry is coming pretty soon. Pay attention to what I am saying. You take this envelope — "

"I'll give it to him as soon as he comes in."

"Now that's exactly what I don't want you to do. I told you to pay attention. Wherry will be here pretty soon. Say nothing to him about the envelope, but when he has been in yonder fifteen minutes — get that? — fifteen minutes — bring it in to him. It will be worth a dollar to you."

Now he understood. The young American when finally he decides to put his mind on a thing, masters it.

In the parlor about a round table four men were sitting, in silence. When Howerson entered they got up heavily from frail chairs. He shook hands with them and they sat down again, depositing their heaviness carefully. One chair cried out in warning creak, and the heaviest of the men, black with whiskers, flinched, arose and sat down on a sofa. His spirit seemed to be the persuasive if not the dominant force, and to him Howerson addressed himself. Yes, he was ready to work for the new company or for any company. Home, children — love had made him humble, and in him the Poet found a soul. To something that was said, something in which there was heart and tenderness, objection was raised by one of the men at the table, the champion of Codowsky. He cared not a snap for love, he said. What he wanted was justice. No children, no wife, he was a free man.

Must the world cease to move on toward liberty because some men were fathers? If marriage stood in the way of the ultimate brotherhood of man, abolish it.

Without the education of heart the mind may be shrewd and strong; but it can never be deep. This fellow had all the set-pieces of controversy, and the Poet smiled as he mused, "I'm glad my disposition of you does not depend on argument."

The frail walls began to tremble. The plaster diver standing on the mantelpiece, slim maiden in light sweater, threatened to jump off. Wherry had come. The men nodded to him as he sat down, cracking the backbone of a settee. In more than one conference the men had met him and from him had nothing to expect. On clock-timed cue the clerk entered with the necessary paper, and with a jerk of fat intended for a start, Wherry rolled his eye upon it. Then he read the will and testament of Codowski. His champion, he of the brotherhood of man, burst out in blasphemous bellow. To him, the Poet, shaking sadly the head of grave disappointment, declared:

"Whoever may win by Codowsky's treachery, the new company appears to lose. For, as I said, we will pay the union scale and no more. Gentlemen, your differences appear to have been settled."

They were settled. Word flew forth that on the morrow all work would be resumed.

Howerson went up to Wherry's room. "I think I can safely say you are about the most peculiar man I ever met," said the superintendent.

"Yes, but you must remember that the stage has eccentric license and that we have just played a play. If you came from a theater where you had seen a farce you wouldn't worry much over the plot."

"Well, I might if I knew that the plot had been copied from actual life."

"All plots are caught from life, sometimes direct from the object, often as if reflected from a mirror transported in a May-day moving van. Cease to marvel at anything. Nature pays as much attention to the construction, life and character of a gnat as of an elephant; and the swallowing of a frog by a bass means just as much to Nature as the destruction of Napoleon's army in Russia."

"Atheist," muttered the fat man.

The Poet caught the word. "Ah, and when you fall downstairs you don't make any more noise in the ear of the Lord than the soft and feathery pat of the sparrow that falls from the telegraph wire."

"Now look here, Mr. Howerson, I have seen from the first that you don't like me. You josh me and you make a joke of life, of business, in fact you seem to be stage struck."

"Very good. You added strength by adding 'business.' Business first, then comes life, if it can. Out of a sort of moody and humorous fellowship I might possibly 'josh' you, but I could never deprave myself so far as to make a joke of business, the sacred Ox."

"Mr. Howerson, your peculiar settlement of this strike hasn't convinced me that you're in your right mind."

"Well, I haven't set up any exaggerated claim. Let me see. I can't get out of your beautiful city until four to-morrow morning. What to do between now and bedtime is more serious to me than the sacred Ox. I didn't happen to bring any books with me. By the way, has Father Carnegie bestowed one of his benedictions upon this town? What, you don't understand? I'm sorry you couldn't have given that countenance to the reading of Codowsky's note. It might not have

added to the result but surely it would have enhanced art."

"Look here," fumed the superintendent; "I want you to understand I won't be made a butt for any man. And I want you to know, too, that Mr. Whateley will get a very decided report from me."

"I hope you do send a careful statement to Mr. Whateley, and if it be a true one, it might relieve you of all future anxiety concerning these mines. I'm not threatening you, but in truth you are not a master but an antagonizer of men. I notice that you pass them in the street as if they were cattle. I see that the children fall back from you. I felt this the moment I saw you, and then I had but to observe to see the impression confirmed. You may not have been the direct cause of the strike but I believe you could have prevented it. Above all, you could have shown those men and their wives and their children that you had a heart, granting to you such a possession. I am here in Mr. Whateley's interest. I don't believe you are. Good day."

Howerson did not wait for a reply. He went out to look for a friend, a book. Mr. Carnegie had not showered on this intellectual desert. But there were books at the drug store, any amount of them, the postmaster said; and therein Howerson found a row of novels running every inch of six feet on the show case. He was looking at their titles, hoping that among them he might find an old friend, when there came a shout, "Well I'll be blowed!" He wheeled about, and there stood an old friend, not bound in buckram but clothed in flesh — Yal Watkins.

CHAPTER XXI.

NOT THE PRINTED BOOK

Love with wings of ecstasy may whir the trembling hours away, but friendship, love's second thought and sometimes better judgment, walks companion with the hours and is grateful that they linger in their pace. Now the Poet no longer sought the printed book, for in Yal Watkins he had mutual reminiscence and kindred observation, a manuscript kept ever fresh and free from mechanic binding. The friends strolled for a time about the town, but as the air was biting, they went to the hotel and with the best cigars offered by the traveler's sample case, quartered themselves in Howerson's room.

"Of all men I least expected to meet you here," said Watkins, sitting down, standing and walking about in expression of his enjoyment. "It was natural enough that you should run across me, for this is a part of my territory. But you!"

"Part of my territory, too, Yal. You've heard of the earth, I suppose."

"Yes," drawled Watkins, "I've struck it a time or two."

"Well, the earth is my territory. How are you doing?"

He had some half a dozen times answered this question, but his friend wanted again to hear him say, "Tip top. I picked up the old glove and put it on."

And now came a question not asked before: "Any disposition to booze?"

" Not a bit. Never a moment's temptation. Liquor may be a disease, but it's a disease that the mind can cure. Give me a light. . . . Thank you. As soon as a fellow realizes that between him and liquor there are no halfway measures, that he must be a slave by association and a master only by abstinence, he's got the dog choked."

" That's true, Yal. More drunkards gag over liquor than smile over it. ' Poverty is the brother of drunkenness and crime,' quoth aptly the scientist of the ancient world."

" Don't know that I'm acquainted with the gentleman, but it's a fact just the same. Happen to have his name about you at present? I don't care who tells a lie, but when a fellow tells a truth I like to get his ' number.' "

" Aristotle — as far ahead of Plato when it comes to truth and common sense as Darwin was of a lisping child."

" I see. I've about let all such things slip since I gave up school teaching in the Black Hills."

" What is it you haven't done, Col. Watkins? "

" Let me see. I've milked goats in Mexico, canvassed for the ' Royal Path of Life ' in the Klondike, run wildcat whiskey down the Kentucky river in tin-lined coffins, sold sassafras sprouts for Alberta peach trees in Oklahoma — and most everything else."

" Enough to prove that you've made an effort to get on in the world. Do you like the cigar business? "

" It's all right enough, George, but I don't like to travel about and go nowhere as I once did. I am beginning to hanker for the luxury of staying in one place at a time."

" How would you like to live here, Yal? "

"Me? You may laugh, but I'd like it. Did I ever tell you I was born out on the pike about three miles from this town? I was."

"Do you know anything about a coal mine?"

"Yes, it's a hole in the ground. But how can a fellow be serious when you fire such questions at him?"

"Do you think you could manage these coal mines?"

"Manage 'em? You don't have to. They can't get away."

"Roundly, roundly, mad wag. I want to know. Could you? It is a position heavy with responsibility, but I want to know and in all seriousness whether you feel equal —"

"George, I could eat it up. My old man, when he wasn't acting, used to operate a mine not ten miles from here, and a coal mine was the darksome front door to the ramshackle mansion of my experience. Manage a mine? Tell me not in mournful numbers. But what about it?"

"A good deal about it. I believe that by my advice Mr. Whateley for his own good is going to erect a derrick and remove this man Wherry. I think the job is worth from four to five thousand a year. And if you feel —"

"Feel! Why, George, I'm tingling all over. Feel! If you can get the job for me I'll trot up the hillside with it under my arm. You know I've always been honest, when the opportunity offered. You know I'd suffer my right arm to be cut off rather than stick you. Without boasting, I tell you I can manage these works better than they were ever managed."

"I believe you, old fellow. I know you are kind-hearted, and without goodness of heart, tempered with judgment as it must be, no man ought to be set over a number of men. In the street as we came along I

noticed what I have seen in you before, that you inspire children with confidence. Without a similar faculty I should now be — but no matter. I believe I can get this place for you, and you convince me that I shall not make a mistake. You may think that I act out of friendship for you, and in a way this is true, but I am moved mainly by another motive, the desire to do everything I possibly can for Mr. Whateley's interest. If you were my twin brother and I did not feel you to be competent, I would get the job for a competent enemy rather than for you. Yal, I am doing sentimental penance, and one of these days when I explain to you, your eyes will blink more astonishment than you were ever able to make them express when on the stage Miss — what was that blonde's name? "

" Oh — er — Miss Hortense Ludwig, to the restricted public, but Sadie Martin by divorce court register."

" Well, when Miss Ludwig as Lady Montrose threw herself into your arms with the shriek that so far as she was able to discover, the house was on fire. Yal, I can't get it out of my head that I am not playing a part. Sometimes when I'm with Whateley I catch myself saying, ' Let's see, what's my cue? ' And at the close of the performance — it will be a quick curtain I fear me.

" We haven't got down to the question under discussion in a very business-like way, but we understand each other, and that's the main point. I'll reach Chicago to-morrow evening about eight thirty and shall go at once to the Big Jolt's castle; and before I leave he'll hear of a fellow named Watkins. He'll say ' Man of experience? ' and answer the walking gentleman, ' Experience? Why he never had anything else! ' "

" I'll go with you to Chicago. I've sold this town

and will instruct myself to go in, preparatory to an attack in another weak quarter of the enemy. I was going in anyway. George, the suddenness of my last rise has left me bewildered. Lord, I couldn't have believed it possible; and the very next day my rags seemed ages ago."

"Misfortunes fly fast to overtake us," said Howerson, "and sometimes they fly fast leaving us. Yal, I'm glad you came into the plot. You help me."

"Help you! Why you soulful simpleton! I'm the squealing pig got out from under the fence. But what will the fat man say to it? I met him in a drug and cigar emporium the other day and asked him to have a weed with me, now selling at five cents, and he told me that it was not his intention to be turned into an advertisement. Won't he object to being turned into the advertisement of his own failure?"

"Verily, verily he will; and he'll scrap for his job, and in argument with Whateley he will log-roll his weight against me."

"But see here," Watkins interposed, "I oughtn't to build my hopes very high until we see how much he weighs. We must —"

A rap on the door. "Come in!" and entered Wherry, just as timely as if the talk had led up to his necessary appearance. "Take this chair," but discretion suggested the bed. But discretion suggests sometimes an opportune action and fails to inspire a timely thought. It seemed that Wherry could not settle upon what to say; and when on such occasions you seek to help a man, you help him inaptly.

"Rather a pleasant evening coming on," said Howerson.

" It's cold," said Wherry.

" But I don't think we're going to have any more frost," ventured Howerson.

" Maybe you don't," declared Wherry.

" Ah, just indicate as to what you'd like for me to say and perhaps I'll say it," said Howerson.

" I guess we've got all the way around the stump," Wherry replied, " and I'd like a few words with you, alone." He looked at Watkins. Howerson spoke up: " Go ahead. Never mind him. He's my secretary."

" He's a cigar dealer and was here before you came. I guess you are playing another one of your little stage skits."

" No, another act of the same one. It is a sort of Chinese drama, and goes on and on. Actors drop out and don't wait to see the happy round-up at the close."

" And I suppose you'd have me believe I've dropped out. Well, it so happens that I haven't; and don't you believe Whateley is going to put me out of this job. I've been with him too long."

"That's what I've been thinking," said Howerson.

" Oh, you have. We'll see about it. I know too much, young man."

" And no library in your town, either."

" Know too much about Whateley's affairs. Don't fool yourself — he won't put me out. And as for you — what do you suppose these men would do if I told 'em of the trick you put over? "

" They'd call it a good trick."

" Yes they would. They'd walk out."

" Saying, ' After you, sir.' "

" Yes, they would. They'd walk out with me."

Howerson yawned. " Any suggestions? "

"Oh, I've offered my suggestions all right enough. Whateley will know what comes next. My statement will get to him about as soon as you do."

"I can take it with me if you've got it ready."

"Yes, I'd let you. It has gone by special delivery."

"Why not by special train? All right, our business is settled. Col. Watkins, the supper bell, methinks."

"Wait a moment," Wherry snorted. "Can't you drop that play-acting rot for a second and talk like a human being?"

"Ha, a Puritan," cried Howerson, turning to Watkins in mimic fright. "We shall be scourged to Tyburn! A wise one said, 'Satire is the sister of Elegy.' Here we have 'em both in one. Behold them."

"Damned fool," Wherry growled.

"Mark, Col. Watkins," said Howerson, his hand on the doorknob. "He says 'damned fool!'—Puritanism turned desperado. Let us send him up a pot of tea to soothe him back into the Quaker-hanging gentleness of his ancestors."

"That's all right, gay buck—but I'll hang your hide on the fence. Mark that, too, Col. Watkins."

"Marked down to cost," Watkins grinned.

"My hide, buck-hide on the fence," moaned Howerson, shuddering at the prospective sight. "And passers-by will say, 'A fair hide, upon my word.' But when your expansive skin hangs out upon the bending hedge, some city journeyer through the lane will say, 'Club house airing its carpet!' Col. Watkins, a strip of leather called steak, a sugared puff ball, shovel-billed catfish pinked and called salmon, muddy chickory called coffee and jelly made of the once prancing foot of the bull-calf of the green, wait for us below. Captain Wherry, adieu."

The superintendent followed them out, muttering: "Loon, if there ever was one. And if Whateley hasn't suspected it before, a sight of you when you get back will make it plain to him."

After supper the friends walked about the town, a quiet though rollic stroll, burlesque philosophers at play, their minds as idle as young dogs unchained and almost as graceful. Other days flew back on gauzy wings, days which once had circled bat-like about them, threatening with clammy wing to slap their faces, days of hunger and nights of distress, but now days of happiness because they were of the past.

At a stall where were sold the news of the day and the month's output of fiction, political abuses, public opinion, illustrated with portraits of old men of the day and young actresses of the moment, the idlers found a treasure, a volume of native odes, sonnets and rhymed protest against this modern and unappreciative life.

Upon this book they seized, and in that exultation which only book lovers can feel, they took it to the hotel to gluttonize over it. In Howerson's room, not long before train time, they were still fresh in the enjoyment of its "dank lush grass," when Wherry came for just a word, he assured them, as he sat heavily on the bed.

"Mr. Howerson, I have waited to see you just before you go."

"All right, but I thought that our characters, we three, so far as they relate one to another, had, for our purposes, been sufficiently developed."

"For Heaven's sake, man, be natural. How can you keep up that nonsense so long?"

"Natural? Don't dogs play? Don't horses kick up their heels? Natural! Why, you are the one determined to live apart from nature."

"You are not natural, sir; you are simply unreasonable."

"Thank thee for that cue. The poet sayeth that man, being a reasoning creature, must get drunk; and wedded to temperance, I am unreasonable that I may keep sober. You come in upon us when we are making the long hour short reading over recovered letters to our lost love, Miss Muse, and laughing because we find that our tribute to her eyebrow was a ditty tuned up with heart throb and sung to a smear of burnt cork. And we are wise to laugh, for

'If all the year were playing holidays
To sport would be as tedious as to work,
But when they seldom come they wished-for come,
And thus nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.'
Thus spoke great Hal in deep soliloquy,
And thus upon John Wherry we enjoin,
That he should come as accident — most rare.

We pay you grave tribute. Don't we, Col. Watkins? Speak up, lad!"

"Yea, couple him up with greatness, let him loll where flesh and genius lolled, while he brings only flesh."

"Bravo, Colonel Watkins, the struck nail sinks to the head. Now, sir, to you we yield the threatened floor."

Wherry puffed out his jaws. "I have been in an insane asylum — "

But emboldened Watkins cut in upon him: "Natural enough, the question being 'why away?'"

"Peace ye," cried Howerson. "Let him speak."

"And I was going to say this: Have been in an insane asylum and never saw such insanity. But I didn't come

to tell you something you ought to have known already, but to say in all fair warning that it would be foolish in you to attempt to bring about a clash between Whateley and me. I have been with him ten years. So let us part on good terms. I am a useful man here and Whateley knows it. I have no family; I have nothing to look after but his affairs. Let us be serious."

"Mr. Wherry," said Howerson, "nothing would please me more. But I am unfortunate in my composition. I can't be serious at will. With me seriousness is a disease, a dropsy of melancholy waters, cured by humorous tapping. And now in bounding health, I'll be as sick with you as I can. I am going to tell Mr. Whateley that you have out-fattened your usefulness here. As I said before, you are unkindly, and for the grouch that believes itself a virtue, I give it entertainment while I hold my watch, to mark off its allotted minute. Col. Watkins, the train."

CHAPTER XXII.

A PIECE OF GOLD

Wherry followed the roisterers down the stairs and out to the hack, where an old fellow whose boast was that once he had owned a stable, now, with two bare-boned horses, was waiting to haul off guests ever impatient to hear his "Git ep." Howerson regretted that he had kept the superintendent out of his bed, assuring him that his staying up was an unexpected, not to say an unnecessary, courtesy. He was not one to depreciate the early morning air; still it was wise that a very big man, exposing more of pore surface than one of a less generous expansion, should have a "shrewd care of his health." Wherry told him not to worry. He ran no risk in coming down. He was not afraid to venture forth in the morning's raw air, especially when he could be of service to a fellow creature: "And that service, sir, is to tell you this: Remember that I know too much. That's all."

The driver cried his sharp but welcome "Git ep," and Wherry's form was merged into the deep shade of the dawn. A dog ran out and barked, snapping at the horses' heels; and from a cottage wherein burned a yellow light, came a Polish cradle song, the words foreign, but the tender melody as universal as the human heart. Some little sufferer was hushed of his crying and soothed of his pain, and some poor creature born to bear the burdens of love, was on the threshold of another long day of toil.

" Stop a moment," Howerson commanded.

" Haven't got much time," the driver growled.

" Stop anyhow." When the hack had halted, the Poet leaped out, ran to the cottage and rapped on the door. A woman came, a woman whose step was weary, and she stood in silence. " For the little one," said the Poet and catching her hand, he closed it on a piece of gold and ran away.

Up and down the platform strode the roisterers, where in the lamplight had gleamed the bayonet, but the soldier now was gone.

" Col. Watkins, I charge ye, sir, behold God's cressets blazing in the sky, brightest just before Dawn, the youngster, comes to snuff them. Mark them, Colonel, and so order your life that it may harvest brightness at the close."

" Yea, verily, Poet; and croak resplendent."

" Col. Watkins, Montaigne's great pen records that Thales was reproached for his poverty, and that thereupon he went out at night, and studying the stars learned from them that there was to be an abundant olive crop. Then what does he do? Mark him. At small cost he gets an option on all the olive presses, thereby gathering much gold. Because he wanted it? Nay. But to show that a philosopher can make money if he lends his mind to it."

" All of which means? "

" Lend your mind to it, Col. Watkins. Get hold of some real estate here and after a while we'll joke it into double value."

" You seem to think I'm really going to get this place."

" Yes, I believe it up to the third degree of seriousness."

"But Wherry keeps on telling us he knows too much."

"The more reason that he should be told to pack his extensive wardrobe. Our caravan approaches."

Out from beneath the fading star the train rushed, and on a frosted hilltop met the flashing blaze-tide of the rising sun.

"Over yonder," said Howerson, humping his shoulder toward a farmhouse, "lives the youth that longs for the city. The tuning-fork has told him that he has a soul for music, and mastery of the multiplication table assures him of his fitness for business. Thus equipped he feels the cruelty of the hand that holds him back from conquest. And let me tell you that here's where the conquerors come from. Out of disturbed Corsicas, beneath banners of silk, march forth Napoleons to make a dice-box of a throne and to shake out the destinies of empires, but from such stagnant life as this about us comes the boa constrictor of trade who, wrapping his folds about a nation, crushes out a revenue such as would have made great Nap blink like a horned owl."

"And you got in with one of them. How the deuce did you do it?"

"I didn't. It was a part of the plot."

"Yes, of course, but, George, you don't mean that a man's life is really marked out for him and that he is compelled to follow it. You don't really mean that, do you?"

"Suppose I say, my dear Colonel, that side trips may be haphazard but that the journey is scheduled?"

"Suppose you should, and then I'd ask, 'Why haphazard side trips? Why not go entirely on schedule?'"

"Then I'd up and say, 'Why not?' In my own case the prearranged plot is too plain and I can't dispute it."

"George, you remind me of the founder of a religion: afraid to make your doctrine commonplace by clearness, you resort to mysticism. I used to know a street preacher, big fellow named Batterson — "

"Yes, Batterson. Go ahead. I think I've heard of him. Where is he now? Have you seen him lately? "

"Ah, see how interested you are in the obscure. Let me see — saw him only a few days ago. But it struck me that he had reformed."

"How? " the Poet inquired eagerly.

"Well, for one thing he had on a clean shirt."

"And the other thing? What about it? "

"He seemed to have a soberer determination than of yore."

"Anybody with him? "

"Someone that might not in the least interest you: a woman. Ah, but she might interest you now that Capital is your stage-manager. Of course you've heard of Annie Zondish, the anarchist. They accused her at the time of having inspired the assassination of McKinley, but this was not true. She is not after rulers but capitalists."

"Yes, Yal — " he did not call him Colonel Watkins now — "but how does it chance that you know so much about her? "

"Why, one night she picked me up out of an alley, fed me on dried fish and commanded me to read her book. It was a black thing — had the scent of a murderer's paw. When she left me, I gave it a bath; I threw it into the river."

"And the other day you saw her with Batterson. Anyone else in the party? "

"Yes, an oldish undertaker of a fellow. He looked as if he had just buried a buzzard, a member of his

own family. In my recovered kingdom of togs and prosperity Annie didn't recognize me, and I didn't care to make myself known, afraid she might ask about her book. But," continued Watkins with a wave of the hand, " to sulphurous depths with 'em. They are not in our plot. Ah, but soft me now, George, let me gentle myself, as our poor old comedian used to say, but have you ever met Whateley's daughter? Both morning and afternoon editions call her handsome. What say you, and how far does she go along with the plot? "

" You look as if you expect me to answer with embarrassment. Yes, I have met her — several times. It would be easy to say ' charming,' wouldn't it? Nothing easier than to say ' handsome, accomplished, thrilling, dazzling.' But ecstasy answers no questions nor does praise set forth character."

" Are you thinking of something to say? " said Watkins.

" No, trying to keep from saying too much. You ask if she is handsome. I could dismiss her looks by saying yes or no."

" But you won't."

" No, for it would be like throwing away a rose while the scent is still sweet. And by the way, her name is Rose."

" Remarkable," said Watkins.

" Oh, not startling. The first impression she made on me was that she must be game. Rather funny, wasn't it? "

" Uproarious. But go ahead."

" Game — that was it. There was something about her eyes that pronounced her fearless. In the wars of the Hussites the Bohemian women fought in the ranks the same as men, and looking at this young woman I have

thought, ' Oh, but you would have been a gallant trooper.' And now I am going to say something foolish."

" I warrant you," said Watkins.

" I am going to say that she has a perfume of manner. She has. Did you ever smell a hickory sapling? Did you ever see one waving gently in a soft breeze and then catch a smell of its nodding buds, so delicate that the girl who was with you laughed at you and said that she couldn't smell anything? This hickory sapling is almost a perfume for the soul; the perfume of this girl's manner is a perfume wholly for the soul. Do you get me? "

" Got you all right, George, but what does she look like? No goddess business. What's her style? "

" Large gray eyes, with maple syrup hair, almost too abundant; tall; a mouth of character, made handsome by the kind words it has uttered; a voice so full of melody as sometimes to rob her words of all meaning, though she is wise in speech; a real laugh — and that's most rare — a laugh whose music steals in upon your dreams and wakes you and makes you sit on the edge of your bed and say, ' Damn it, man, this won't do.' Can you see her? "

" I have seen her, George, in an auto in front of the old man's office; and I said to myself that she was as well-finished a young woman as I had ever seen; and while a fellow that has gone through the rolling mill as I have is not given to sentiment, I thought that if I had the gold topnot of a duke she could take it away from me and pawn it if she wanted to. The fellow that was with her — "

" What's that? "

" The fellow that was with her got out, and the first thing about him that struck me, was the enormous

length of his legs. You remember that out on the road we used to say of a long-legged fellow that he must have served as a bell boy at a country hotel and acquired his high split by running up the stairs."

"He, he," the Poet laughed, "a fellow with long legs. Must have been exceedingly funny. Well, what about him? Haven't you got anything else to say? Do you dismiss a man for all time simply because his infernal legs happen to be long? What about him?"

"Well, he looked as if he might have owned a trust or two. I was wondering whether your plot concerns him."

"Can't possibly. I don't think we are ever to be on at the same time."

"You can't tell," said Watkins. "He may give you some little annoyance, but of course it's in the forecast that you are to marry this charming woman. How about that, as you go along?"

"It can't be, Yal. You know that after all this is an old-time play, with its jumble of comedy and tragedy, and it is to end in murder."

"What!"

"In the murder of Hope. There will be a confession, the devil arises and down through an up-pouring of red light he descends with old George. And now my aim is to put it off, to hold the audience as long as possible. But it must come."

"Confession be blowed. Tell her you love her. That's the only confession that counts with a woman."

"But the confession is not to her, but to the old man."

"Nothing to it, George. Your confession is simply the acknowledged parentage of certain follies, the stage and a vagabond love for a trollop in rags, strayed child of an almost respectable family, Miss Verse. I might

add another weakness, straw-colored liquor held high with a song and viewed through the light of the transom. But, old George, a fellow that could gather himself up and then resurrect me, old broken-life me, can do anything."

"Col. Watkins, enough. We'll now go into the dining car and eat a planked whitefish, old enough to be the great grandsire of the minnows we used to catch on a pin hook, and kept in chill storage ever since that time. Come, roundly, roundly, and let me lead thee to the feast."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MILLIONAIRED LONG LEGS

Upon arriving in town, Howerson, taking Watkins with him, drove to the hotel where he still retained a room, and where he expected to find certain garments from the tailor's, paid for in advance. To his friend he said that he was going out to the "Big Jolt's" house looking as much as possible the smooth and easy victor. He may not have realized it, but his mind at this moment dwelt upon a certain man, name unknown, but possessed of long legs. Yes, there were the clothes, together with neckties that seemed to enjoy one another's bright society. With a smile the Poet looked upon them, and hastening to make ready he said to Watkins that he would take a taxi and be back in a jiffy. Watkins was instructed to remain. Oh, there was no need to be anxious over the probable outcome. It was not probable; it was certain. In a mirror he caught sight of himself and bowed. It was not vanity; it was armament.

"Coat fits like the bark of a beech tree, eh, Col. Watkins? Thank you. . . . Your opinion is of worth. What the deuce is that phone ringing for? See who it is." He turned about and waited. "Oh, the taxi. Be ready in a minute. You'll find a book or so on the table to while away the time. I won't be gone long. I'm glad, old fellow, you are so interwoven in the plot. But I don't think it a play, though, that women will like. It can't be helped, however. A man can play only

what is in him. The highest art is to please one's own soul with consciousness of truth. If virtue were as tight as this damned glove, she'd burst her own hide. It's without Sunday moral, this play, Colonel. Well, I'm off."

In the taxi Howerson mused over Watkins' amended ending of the play. The old man had accepted him as a sort of prodigy, an opportune commercial inspiration, listening amused to his confessions of unworthiness; but could even little Calvin's confidence and admiration serve as shield against the discovery that while a trusted servant he sought to be a thief? But was he ambitious of so bold and exalted a robbery? Had hope dared drink itself so drunk? And in disclaiming it all, his mind thought itself honest. In meshes of metaphor he tangled himself, and laughed himself free. "Don't think, grim dramatist, that I fail to catch your aim," he mused. "It would serve as one of your sweetest and most revengeful jokes to set my heart on fire and bid me urn the ashes and weep over them. You know that with all my vanities, I have galley-slaved for no woman, and now—" The taxi slowed, stopped, and he got out among automobiles and carriages, in front of Whateley's house. Lights blazed from doors and windows.

At the door a squash-faced flunky inquired the Poet's name. Never mind the name. He was not an invited guest, but had come to see Mr. Whateley on urgent business. At the word business the flunky let fall his jaw. He had heard the word, an American word, and though the menial of it, held it in contempt. Old Paul caught sight of Howerson, came forward, and requested him to step into the library. Old Calvin was not a part of the "function." Off from the library was an emergency room for business that dogged him home, and in this

annex, known slyly as the "Inquisition," the master was shut up with a man from South America.

"I will tell him you are here and he will see you as soon as possible," said old Paul.

The hum of voices, music, laughter were borne from the drawing rooms, and from the gridiron on which he sat the Poet caught shifting sight of a dazzling scene. He saw a very tall man swim slowly through a choppy tide of white shoulders and — Rose met him, took his arm. What was that? They were coming toward the library. They entered, and Howerson arose with a bow, mastered under the tutelage of a stage-manager of the old school.

"Why, Mr. Howerson!" and she came forward with such frankness, with grace so simple and sincere that he felt ashamed of himself. "I didn't know you'd got back. Oh, you've just returned. Let me introduce Mr. Smill."

And his legs were long. Having fallen into an argument Smill and Rose had come to consult a book, to settle it; and it looked as if Mr. Smill could stand flat of foot and pluck down the "highest-roosting nightingales." Smill! Well, there was at least some comfort in the name. The book, Petronius Arbiter. What the deuce did he know about a book like that? What intellectual right had he? But he did know, and won the argument. He spoke of Europe, whence he had of late returned, as if it were his playground, the Mediterranean as his "Old Swimming Hole."

The worst of it was that Rose seemed pleased to hear him talk. But surely she could not love him. And why not? Did not history come forward titteringly to prove that many of the world's handsomest and most intellectual women have been enamored not only of physical

but of moral deformity? Not much condolence to be eked from such speculation. But the name Smill, that was soothing. Ah, but how stupid not to have recalled a name so often headlined by the newspapers. Arthur Smill, steel-maker of Pittsburgh and of Gary, son of a father who when dying smiled upon the poor but not until then; Arthur Smill, the origin of whose seventy-five millions sprouted in the soil of grandadish antiquity. Not always does great wealth hold with his brother, more great wealth, contemptuous converse over illuminated manuscript and the sacred inkhorn of God's sublime sufferer, the poet. The third generation, cleansed of sharp bargain's grime, stands patron to tomb-forgotten genius and invites his immortal children, old books, to the club and to auction held in church.

"Yes," said Smill as Rose listened to his talk, "no matter who the man may be, in the library he can always reach up and take down his master."

In him Howerson no longer saw a man of only money and long legs, but a balanced gentleman, a student; but to what degree the influence of seventy-five millions entered into this estimate, he could not trust himself to determine; and the Poet mused, letting fall a hopeless look upon the woman: "He's flattening me out on my own ground."

A poor part was the Poet, of late so confident and so rollicking, now to play; and lending his mind to drollery he sought to trip up dignity, captivating to a fun-loving woman when it succeeds. But it did not, for here he was met with humor, not the millionaire's own, but of the trust, and as in all matters of the syndicate, directed with cunning force. Rose laughed and "millions" chuckled with good fellowship. Then the Poet made the discovery that in a way the steel man's mind was too

well ordered, that in his criticism of creative thinkers there was no insinuative newness, no original exploration, no metaphysical surprise in his whim or crisp exactness in his observations; and now, accommodated to his own egotism, the Poet counted victory at least in some measure, when he caught a stammer in the mind of this tall intruder into the plot.

Rose was so taken with the flavor of " Pal's " courage that she withheld herself from the tilt-yard of this spirited though good-humored joust, but suspecting that there was on the part of either knight a lag of thrust, she would slyly warm him to it.

It seemed that of late she had been much in Smill's company, and had grown a bit weary of his learning. With the poor there is some excuse for scholarship, an ancient right; while the rich, robbing poverty of rags washed at the sacred pool, add tatters to fine raiment and make boast of it. The Poet caught her mood.

" With the rich," he said, " mind may be permitted to go on unproductive journeys, if they be short, but to them the real province of the mind is not to spin fancies but to weave cloth. Carnegie buys books by the shipload, but to him the book is not the mind's master achievement, nor is it consistent with his nature and experience that it should be. America offers over other nations no advantage of books, and America is the world's richest nation. Italy is rich in sentiment only, and out from among marble hands, admired of the world, is stretched a real hand, grimy and wrinkled, the hand of poverty, begging. ' The mind's greatest and most lasting achievement is to create wealth, ' says Mr. Carnegie."

" I beg your pardon, Mr. — " He could not get Howerson's name and Rose in sly mischief refused to help

him. " Beg your pardon, sir, but I count Mr. Carnegie as one of my closest friends, and I never heard him say that."

" Oh, he may not have said it to you, but I can hear his spirit shout it to the world."

" Ah, but you can sit back and make a man's spirit shout anything you please; and I can say, ' I didn't hear it,' and then you can reply, ' Probably not. You are deaf.' "

" Yes, and you might be deaf. A man is always deaf to any spirit shout he doesn't care to hear. But answer me this: Do you regard Mr. Carnegie as a great man? "

" I surely do — a wonderful man."

" As great a man, for instance, as Edgar Poe? "

" Well, but they are so totally different that you can't compare them. It would be unjust to both. But if you ask me which one of these men has been of greater benefit to mankind, I shall say Carnegie; and, I believe that a poll of the public would bear me out."

" Undoubtedly. Poe wrote a few books; Carnegie has given millions of books to the public. You will admit it is generous to build libraries."

" Admit it," laughed Mr. Smill. " Why, I proclaim it."

" Of course. Now suppose I were possessed of five hundred millions and should set aside one hundred millions for Art. Would that be generous? "

" To the public, yes."

" And suppose that Art should consist of a monument over my own grave. Would that be generous? Wouldn't it be an expression of vanity? "

" Well, putting it that way, probably so."

" And yet you call it generous when in nearly every town in the country Mr. Carnegie builds a monument to

himself. Suppose Mr. Carnegie, upon deciding to give away a certain sum of money, had assembled a number of old men and said to them, ' You men have burnt out your eyes with gazing into the bubbling metal of my melting pots. You are old and poor. It is not for me to say that you could have been rich. You didn't happen to be constituted that way. But it is for me to say that I had thought to establish a large number of libraries throughout the country, involving an expenditure of millions, but I have changed my mind. I am going to apportion this money among you. You helped me to acquire it. Don't say anything about it.' And now Mr. Smill, wouldn't that have been more generous than the building of a thousand brick and mortar monuments unto himself? I have observed that people who really want books can get them; and I've noticed, too, that a million books will not induce some people to read. What do you think of it? "

Hereupon Rose cried out: " I'll tell you what I think, Mr. Howerson. I think you are right. Poverty doesn't care for books, and the people for whom those libraries are intended are able to buy them. The enjoyment and the profit of books require a sort of free mental atmosphere, and the literary charity patient is rarely benefited or grateful. It so happens that I know a great deal about the working of the charitable machine, and I know that books are not what a certain class looks to for happiness. Mr. Carnegie's class has the books already; and the only true intellectual charity that I can see is to move the lower order up into the library class."

Mr. Smill smiled with illuminative indulgence. When a woman talked " wisdom " it was to him as prettily ingenious as the doll that squawks when you squeeze it.

"How is all this to be brought about?" he inquired, and what a tribute to her sex that from her he should seek not amusement but information.

"Not by buildings with domes," she said. "And never by any system of organized charity. You may organize against the cause of poverty but not against poverty itself. Seek out the individual and help him, and in his turn the individual knows whom to help. The guide to distress is not the man of millions but the fellow who hasn't a penny. Take Dr. Henshaw, for instance. Do you suppose he could find virtue in distress — outside of his own creed? In view of doing charity work worth while, I have thought of employing some woman from the slums to teach me, to go about with me, to help merit find employment."

No light of indulgence now glowed forth from the countenance of Mr. Smill. "And a fine reputation you would have at the close," he said in a failing effort to smile.

Now fell another opportunity for the Stage Manager of the Old School. Howerson bowed to Miss Whateley and gave to Smill a sort of dignified shudder. "Grace may accomplish most when most she risks her reputation," he said, and to himself he mused, "Old fellow if you put this one over, you're good." And he did. All that Smill needed to do was to laugh, and this down-stage trick would have lost its countenance. But he did not laugh, that is, quickly enough, and a delayed laugh is as much an acknowledgment of defeat as a timely guffaw is a declaration of victory. Howerson's blood warmed his fingertips, his ears, and then he felt it leap like a steel-head salmon. He had heard Rose whisper, "Pal." Then came the thought that his too eager ear might in its straining have caught an accent of its own creation,

and in still water the leaping fish fell dead. Keen hope gave her a glance and she smiled, but not with the stolen slyness that his heart might seize upon as confirmation of his thirsty ear.

And what could have been more unkeyed with his tension than these her words addressed to Smill: "What were we talking about, anyway?"

The millionaire laughed a stupid laugh, and the Poet mused, "You have given to him your promise, and like the wife who playfully takes sides against her husband, you are having sport with me." Then how easy out of this Croesus to fashion an Apollo. True, his legs were long, but were they not shapely? Was not his face confident with the lofty brow of learning? Was not his eye clear and strong? And while assuming the air of modesty did not his bearing acclaim him one of the powerful? Yes, what were they talking about? Smill said he did not know, and in accommodation rather than in interest looked to Howerson as prompter. The Poet bowed himself out of such responsibility and looked to the young woman for a fresh cue; and in her smile he read, "I did not call you 'pal' just now. It was impudent of you to think so."

"Oh, do you play golf, Mr. Howerson?" she cried, as if it were a forgotten question she had longed to ask. "I had Mr. Smill out to-day, but it was too early in the season. The course was —"

"Frightful," said Smill. "The green would have made an archbishop swear."

"And you did not," she spoke admiringly, "What self-restraint. Do you play, Mr. Howerson?"

"I tried it one season when opportunity offered, and in a way formed genial acquaintance with driver, brassy

and midiron, but the mashie made servile conquest of me, and in acknowledged defeat I bowed to the sward. No, I don't play, but I am glad that I tried, for it gave me new views of landscapes; and to-night I saw a star lying on the green of the heavens, just a good putt from Jove's Silver Cup, the Moon."

Rose cried "Good," and looked to Smill for confirmation.

Through the off corner of his mouth, that gentleman muttered, "This fellow's a crank. I much prefer fencing," he spoke out. "And even here Miss Whateley can give me — I might say — cards and spades."

"But I can never reflect due credit on my marvelous teacher," said Rose. "Mr. Howerson, you must have heard of old Colonel Banstree."

"What, is he living? Heard of him! Why, before going on the stage I took lessons of him. He was then nearly eighty and that was five years ago."

"Oh, and you took lessons of him. Sometime we will go to see him, you and I, for if he once knew you he knows you now, and would be glad to see you. He is one of the most interesting characters I have ever known, and I am very fond of him. His armory, as he terms it, is not far from our house."

With sincere invitation in her eyes she looked at Howerson, and the fervor with which he accepted and which he had not been able to shield against the penetration of Smill's quick eye, did not, he felt, advance him in the estimation of the great capitalist. But in truth his thought was but a bit of self flattery, for Smill, having cast him out of his mind, had been surprised to find him still standing there.

From the company of lesser moneyed weights the

" multitudinous " capitalist must not long withdraw himself. Eyes jealous for the favor of a glance from him began to look uneasily about.

" Oh, where is Mr. Smill? " and " Oh, here they are," and into the library came laces, jewels, society's buds, blossoms, matured flowers; and in the light of the great chandelier flashed beauty's nacreous smile. " Here they are," and Smill and Rose were borne away on a gladsome tide, leaving the Poet to stand alone in a dazzled memory. But for only a few moments. Old Paul came forward with the word that Mr. Whateley was ready to receive him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE INQUISITION

Into a room that seemed close and tight with exactness, the "Inquisition," Howerson was shown by the old butler, who took at once to flight as if he had cause to dread the eye that might be turned upon him. Whateley was sitting with his back toward the door. He did not look around; he said, "Come in," and his voice was harsh. Ah, what leagues of dusty roadway and thorn-bordered trail lay between this grim room and the Cabin with its sentiment, its mellow light. The old man was gazing at a letter lying on the desk before him. He turned it over, seeming to pluck up with his eyes the fiber of the paper, Wherry's special delivery, Howerson conjectured.

"Sit down, Mr. Howerson."

He sat down. From the drawing rooms now so far away, floated the perfect notes of laughter's music, and then there came the bulging strains of a baritone song, some calf ambitious to bellow into the ears of the select.

Whateley looked up. "The dispatches have announced the end of the strike and the withdrawal of the troops. You did your work quickly, Mr. Howerson."

"It did not take long. It was simple. I suppose Wherry in his special delivery, tells you all about it."

"No. The last word from him said that the situation was growing worse. How did you bring about the agreement?"

In telling him Howerson found it hard to restrain his

actor temptation, but he did, taking instead and by happy recourse, the poet's shortcut for effect, a brevity that business might well adopt. The old man smiled and but for the traditions and future purposes of the "Inquisition," might have laughed.

"That was shrewd, very shrewd. It was what my daughter would call art, and my son term the necessary rascality of business. The two hundred dollars devoted to art, or necessary rascality, shall be placed to your credit."

For a few moments he was silent. From the drawing rooms, now a little nearer, came the music of high spirits, with one note sweeter than all the rest, Rose's note, the Poet knew. He waited, yearning for more. The old man spoke.

"I expected more trouble. I had faith in your — imagination, but didn't expect it to work so quickly." He mused, and then — "I should think, Mr. Howerson, that the greatest achievement of the school is to enable a man to explore his own imagination. The self-made man has imagination — more, perhaps, than the scholar, but it is irregular. In it there are caves where great images hide themselves. The trouble with our statesmen is not commercialism, but want of imagination. The cheese knife has no imagination, but the reaping machine — " He broke off abruptly. He was violating the traditions of the room, and the Poet, wise enough to understand, was silent. . . . How was he to promote the interest of Yal Watkins? Wherry had lied about the special delivery. This might in some way offer an opening and while he was seeking to employ it, the old man spoke:

"By the way, Mr. Howerson, the preacher who married your aunt — the missionary, you know — called on

me the other day." The blank look of Howerson's countenance brought a smile, another violation of tradition.

"W — w — what! I have no aunt, Mr. Whateley."

"Ha, an imposter. I thought so."

He told of the visit of Hudsic, and Howerson felt his interest fly from Watkins and center upon himself. He must at once contrive some excuse for getting out of town, if for no longer than even a week. Beyond that length of time he could not see himself. Other men might lay plans that involved years, but the diagram of his conduct must be drawn afresh, day by day. Suddenly there came into his mind fragments he had caught of a conversation between two men at a hotel in New Orleans.

"I suspected," said Whateley, "that he might be in some way implicated with the strike out yonder."

"One of the stirrers-up no doubt," Howerson replied, with an artful carelessness. "By the way, Mr. Whateley, while in New Orleans I chanced to overhear something that might possibly be of interest to you. I chanced to hear two men talking. Up in Ontario, Canada, at Sturgeon Falls, about one hundred and fifty miles north of Toronto, there is perhaps as complete a water power as exists anywhere on this continent. A number of years ago an English company harnessed the power and established there a great paper mill, which, owing largely to the handiness of all needed material, became an immediate success. But after several years of prosperity there came a strike. The Englishmen became impatient with the men, closed down and returned home. It appears that this great property can now be acquired for less than one-half the original cost; perhaps at one-third. The material for pulp is practically inexhaustible.

Capital, especially American capital, has closed its eyes upon this great opportunity, and purely on account of the tariff over here. But this barbaric wall cannot stand always. It will be battered down by the progressive guns of all parties, and then that water power will be worth millions. The — ''

Whateley was looking down at the letter on his desk. '' Proceed, Mr. Howerson.''

'' Thank you. I didn't know but you might be interested.''

'' I am, sir. It might be an immeasurable opportunity. As you say, that tariff wall must come down. The party that opposes it will die. Ah, suppose you take a run over there and quietly look around. It is at least worth investigation.''

'' I shall leave to-morrow morning, sir.''

'' Very good.''

Now Howerson's interest returned to Watkins. '' Mr. Wherry, I believe, has been with you some time.''

'' Yes, quite a while.''

'' I don't think he is the proper man for the position.''

'' Eh? ''

'' He is harsh, and is devoid of sympathy. I saw a little boy about Calvin's age, shrink back from him as he passed along, and — ''

'' Eh? ''

'' The children are afraid of him. I intimated, and rather strongly, too, that he did not represent your interest as he should, and I hinted that possibly there might be a change.''

'' Ah, you did? ''

'' And he laughed. He said that he knew too much.''

'' Eh? ''

" Knew too much."

" Knows too much," said the old man. " That is true. He does."

It looked bad for Watkins. Howerson could see him walking up and down the room at the hotel, could see his yellow beard, badge of gayety and of melancholy.

" He knows — " The old man coughed. " He knows that he owes me five thousand dollars, overdrawn salary. That is what he knows, Mr. Howerson. But he needn't think I'll keep him on account of that five thousand dollars. And you told him there might be a change. You told him right."

The Poet could see Yal walking up and down the room. His yellow beard caught the light and was not melancholy. " Mr. Whateley, I know the man to take Wherry's place."

Whateley looked at him. " Yes? What manner of man? Tell me about him."

" A man of good address, of executive sympathy — "

" Of what? "

" A man who knows the value of imagining himself the other fellow. He understands the workings of a coal mine, his father having practically, you might say, brought him up in that line."

" Yes? " The old man seemed to turn up the light of his eyes into a searching glare. " How does it happen that he is in need of a place now? "

Howerson was ready. " He has for a time been away from the mining business, has been traveling, in fact, but knowing his fitness, wishes to return to it." And then conscience plucked at him. " The fact is, Mr. Whateley, he was unfortunate and — "

" I don't like that."

"He was down, Mr. Whateley, but has arisen; and the man who arises is sometimes stronger than the man who has never sunk."

"Very true, sir."

"And I hope that you will accept my — my pawned honor in his behalf, and give him an immediate trial."

"On your recommendation, Mr. Howerson, I will give him a trial, certainly. The salary is five thousand a year. Let him see me at the office to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

The old man's countenance said "that ends it," Howerson said "thank you," and was out in the great hall where chattering strollers amid illumined shrubbery might have fancied themselves in an enchanted thicket. There was the young woman from whose juicy lips slang fell sweet, and the bald-headed Professor of Philology who caught it; and there was the young buck of prosaic instinct, striving to adorn his talk with the trailing vines of sentiment. Howerson did not look around, did not see Rose, but he thought that he heard long-legged Smill talking down to her, the confident edict of monstrous wealth.

When he entered the room Watkins was dozing on the bed. The colonel rose up, blinking, stared at his friend.

"Ah, Colonel Watkins."

Watkins leaped from the bed and seized Howerson's hand.

"But why this affecting scene, Colonel? In the language of Sir John to all Europe, 'whose mare's dead?' What's up?"

"Why that position is up, George — up to me. If the 'Big Jolt' had turned you down you'd have called me Yal instead of Colonel. You don't 'Colonel' me,

George, except as a guy, and you don't guy a fellow when he's down."

"Right you are, Professor."

"Professor!"

"Of Psychology. He'll give you a trial, which means the job, salary five thousand. Call at his aerie at ten to-morrow. Let go my paw."

"But aren't you going up with me, George?"

"No, I'm off for Canada, partly on business but mostly for my immediate health. Sit down."

Watkins sat down. Howerson took a turn about the room. "Immediate health, Colonel. I live from day to day, respite granted by the hours. With me it is —"

"So do we all, George. Ancient as he got to be, old Parr lived only from second to second."

"Constant experiment with death, Colonel."

"Same with us all, old man."

"With cold breath blowing at the 'brief candle,' crying, 'out, out.' But let hang-fire Pistol discharge himself of his news: I told the old man that I'd pawn my honor in your behalf, and at the mention of honor he didn't smile, but with gravity accepted my gaze, asked questions, which I answered with a brevity almost to the suppression of a syllable. So let me charge you, be brief. Look your claim and don't word it. Business accepts silence as self-confidence. Wear your silk hat, Yal. The plug hat is the four-flush of civilization, but business hasn't found it out yet — is afraid to 'call.'"

"I'll do as you advise, and land the job all right. But, George — look at me, please."

"All right. Go ahead."

"George, it seems that you are in dread of something. What is it?"

"That one of my poems might take fire by spontaneous combustion, blaze up and attract attention."

"Nonsense, George; tell me. I might be able to help you. I'm no weakling. I can face odds for a friend. Confound it, are you to help a fellow always and never let him help you? Look what you've done for me tonight. Look what you are always doing for everybody and always have. While a vagabond your soul was unselfish — I remember the night in the hay when you swore you were too warm and by main force covered me with your coat; and in the morning there was frost on your hair. And now when possibly I might be able to help you, to stand with you and face the mysterious danger you've hinted at — out with it, George."

On the foot of the bed Howerson sat down, resting an arm on the brass railing. Upon his friend he smiled, called him a dice thrower; and when Yal's look asked him why, he answered that a dice thrower was always suspicious. The Poet could lie to a friend as readily and doubtless with as much zest as to a mere acquaintance.

"I am threatened with no mortal danger, Colonel, except the remote danger of starvation, inherited enemy of my ilk. And I am not yet far enough out of the briar patch which I mistook for Arden to talk horse instead of to bray. Braying is always more or less figurative you know, for the Ass is one of our most aptly used figures of speech. Ignorance often thinks in unhappy allusions, and to the degree that I remain a poet, I am ignorant. To the enlightened a word is a sound, to the bard, a throb; one is of the head, the other of the breast; so if I sometimes throb, and a little out of rhythm, pass it up, Colonel. By the way, I saw his Longleglets. And do you know that old hag Fate is playing the deuce with our drama?"

"How so?"

"Going to marry Rose Whateley to Longleglets."

"Impossible, George. That would ruin the play."

"I know that. But many a play has been ruined — many a play that promised well. You see, this fellow is one who, favored by an all-wise government, has drawn seventy-five millions out of the cradle of an infant industry. He sells steel bridges in India cheaper than in America. And he hands his iron words down to her, and she takes them, tottering under their weight. Oh, he's heavied her down and she can't get away."

"Impossible, George. As I read the script it says that you are to marry her. Why, that is plain in act one."

"I marry her! Don't be a fool, Yal."

"I'll try not. But you haven't seen all the lines of the play, and how do you know she will surrender to Longleglets?"

"I've seen as many of the lines as you have, Yal, and — didn't I say something about seventy-five millions?"

Yal nodded his acknowledgment of the fact that this sum of money had been mentioned.

"Very well then," Howerson proceeded. "And did you ever know a woman to turn down an offer made by seventy-five millions?"

"Well, I've never known very many women who were exposed to that strong a draft. And I don't suppose there are many poverty-stricken dames that would fail to catch the tune when a multiplied millionaire sings to 'em, but you must remember that the Big Jolt has no slouch of a purse himself. Do you recall our great Shakespearean revival over the market house in Janesburg, when you padded out for Falstaff?"

"Yes, but what's that got to do with it? Yal, sometimes you are as zigzag at the flight of a butterfly."

"Ah-hah; and you recollect old Sir John says, 'Hook on, hook on.' You used to put a mighty fetch into those words, George. You let that steel man have his heavy say, and when he's done, 'hook on, hook on.'"

"Yal—"

"Yes, George."

"You go to the devil. I'm going to bed."

CHAPTER XXV.

SLAPPED HIS FACE WITH A LOOK

On his way to Whateley's office Watkins rehearsed himself. With steady eye he would meet sharp look, and with short and confident words beat down all suspicion as to his want of aptitude for the job. Was not his beard most shrewdly trimmed, and was not his plug hat rich in harvest of the sun's luster? He wished that old George were there to view his grand entry. It would make the Poet proud, delight his sad sense of humor; and to Yal, George's approving twinkle was a knighthood, a gold-buckled garter of the heart.

In the waiting room Big Jim poured over Watkins the lazy waves of a slow look, but Jim's slowness was all mental, for with springy heel he ambled in to announce the expected visitor. Watkins fidgeted with himself.

"Step in, sir," said Jim.

He stepped in. Whateley glanced at him and with one look slapped his face red. "Ah, Mr. Watkins, I believe. Mr. Howerson has doubtless explained to you. I have telegraphed Wherry. You will leave for Rockville at once. Good day."

And without having had a chance to utter one of his confident words, Yal was out in the anteroom, in the corridor, pushing the button of the elevator.

"Confound him, what was the use of my coming? Wouldn't know me now if he'd see me sitting on a stump. Dazzled me with his lamps and told me to get out. Didn't see my — where is that damned hat?" He

clapped his hand to his head, knocked his hat off; and a messenger boy shouted his laughter down the hall.

But as Yal hastened through the street he mused: "I've got the job, though, and nothing else counts for much."

He took off his hat to mop his brow, and then he was conscious that a woman had turned quickly out of the crowd and was standing beside him. "I didn't know you until you took off your hat," she said.

He felt elated, witty. A great financier had flattered him with a look. "When a man's hat is off he has surrendered to a woman," he replied; and with a bow: "Begging pardon, but would you mind letting me know who I am to you now that my hat's off?"

She looked up at him and he smiled at her, but her lips were tight. "You have an ungrateful memory," she said.

"Maybe so," he admitted, "but at least not a very reproachful one. Let me see. You are — are — "

"I am Annie Zondish."

"Oh, I beg your pardon."

"Granted. Clothes not only disguise us but blunt our perceptions."

"Good. Wisdom cries out in the street but one man *does* take heed, which cues us up to — your pleasure, Miss Zondish."

She wore a red cap not much larger than a saucer. Her hair fell loose and the wind tangled it about her face. With nervous hand she brushed it from her eyes.

"Can you give me five minutes of your time?"

"Raise you five. Ten," he answered.

"Thank you. Down in here."

She led him down into a basement chop house, and when they had sat down she ordered a pot of tea. He

asked her if she would not do him the honor of eating something, and she shook her head. She told him that he was her guest, smiling across at him, leaning on the table. Silently he admired the gleaming whiteness of her shapely throat. He would take nothing, he said; he would sit by while she drank her tea. He wondered what she could want with him. Doubtless she credited his reformation to herself. He waited. . . . The tea was poured for her and she sipped it slowly, from a spoon, having much trouble with stray locks of wind-tugged hair. She looked at the spoon, appeared not to like it, wiped it with a corner of the table cloth. He waited.

"Where is your friend?" she inquired, looking at the spoon.

"Friend? What friend?"

"Didn't you go to a hotel with a man last night?"

She looked straight into his eyes.

"Yes, with George Howerson," and then flashed through his mind the Poet's vague hint of coming trouble. Ah, and this woman might be hidden somewhere in the folds of its mystery. To gallantry, old George was not unknown, and Zondish was possessed of a wild berry lip.

"Charming fellow, isn't he?" she said.

"Prince, and as true to his own as a robber in romance."

"Oh. And you have doubtless known him for a long time?"

He nodded. "We used to turn one set of mules out of the barn, advertise for another set and give 'em Shakespeare."

"Ah, you were on the stage with him."

"Well, I was in the manger with him."

" The last time I met him — Oh, quite a while ago, he was thinking of going back to the stage. Is he still of that notion? "

" I didn't know he had such a notion. Back to the stage? " He gripped the edge of the table, gazing at her, glaring in truth, for his spirit was aroused. " Stage! There is no stage. There is a song and dance called the stage, but the drama, the drama made glorious by the human voice in perfection, is dead. Shadows that struck terror to King Richard have killed it; I mean the motion picture. Once Art addressed the soul, but now the jealous eye — "

With a gesture she reaped him from his theme. She said that all art had its time to die and must die when the time came. But who in the automobile weeps over the oxcart stalled in the mire? Mr. Howerson was no doubt wise enough to understand, and after all, why should he think of returning to poetic poverty when he could live in unpoetic affluence? " And I know he must be prosperous now," she said.

" Well, he's not compelled to eat garlic in a windmill," he declared, eyeing her shrewdly.

" As I say, it has been some time since I saw him. Has he changed much? What are his habits? Tell me."

" Well, unless otherwise employed he does something else."

She frowned at him, drank from the cup, had more trouble with her hair. " You might at least answer a civil question from one — "

" From one whom I have occasion to remember gratefully. I beg your pardon. I haven't been with him enough of late to know what his habits are, if he has formed any, but if you wish to know whether he is true

to his old friends, I can tell you that he is. No nobler heart beats."

Winsomely she smiled upon him. "I am glad to hear you say that. But lest you think me too inquisitive let me say that between us there was nothing more than friendship. Do you believe me?"

"Your words, yes; but your eyes, your throat, your — "

"No rubbish please," she broke in. And then she asked: "Where is he now?" She looked down into the cup.

"He's gone abroad."

Her eyes flashed in his face. "Are you telling me the truth?"

"Didn't you remind me just now that I had cause to be grateful to you? Then why should I tell you an untruth?"

The light of her eyes seemed to beat upon his face with throbbing heat, and he felt that she held him in scorn.

"Grateful to me! Man at some vague time may have been grateful to man, but never to woman. Every man that has ever lived has at some moment of his life been a scoundrel to woman. That's why you would lie to me. It is your inheritance. It is in your blood."

"Sorry you didn't come to the stage before the drama turned up its toes," he said. "Old John McCullough would have gloried in you, and Booth, the Hamlet of us all — you wouldn't suppose I'd ever played Hamlet. I know you wouldn't; but I have and it was a hit — with a potato. If it had been baked and a trifle of salt and butter had been tossed with it, I — "

"Answer my question. Are you telling me the truth?"

"To go abroad is to leave one's country, isn't it?"

"Yes," she nodded without speaking, looking straight into his eyes.

"Then on the honor of a man who has none to throw away, he has gone abroad — left early this morning."

"Will he sail from New York?"

"On the honor of a man who knows what it is to smell high fish in the Ghetto, I believe not."

And now her eyes held the dark glow of contempt. "Lying is an American trait and they call it humor," she said. "You would lie to a distress, joke with Job."

"I have joked with Abraham, and he ticketed my jest and put it into his safe."

"And with every word you are proving what I say."

"I talk, then, in the interest of truth."

"You illustrate a truth to enforce a lie."

"With your metaphysical mace you dent my helmet. Come to Hecuba. What's it all about? Put yourself to the strain of a little truth as you go along, and tell me your real object in wanting to know where Howerson is."

"My object concerns me, and is not what you believe it to be."

"All right. I'll swear to you that by to-morrow night he will be out of the United States."

She got up, and as he arose she said: "It may be possible that you are telling me the truth. Woman must keep on believing man, though she may know better. Civilization means man's enacted lie. You with the rest are a traitor. You have sold yourself for a silk hat."

"Hold on, Miss Zondish; don't leave out a clean shirt."

She had a sense of humor, and she laughed, but

resented it instantly and turned it into a cough. She lingered, adjusting her cap. "You are an ungrateful wretch," she said. "I gathered you up out of an alley. Better had I let you die. Better, too, that I had let someone else die."

"Wait a minute," he spoke pleadingly and she turned toward him. "Someone else. Then you saved old George, too. For that piece of work I am deeply grateful. And as for myself I thank you, but with me it didn't matter so much."

She looked at him, and he held forth his hand, but she drew back, and without speaking, turned away and left him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WANTED: A MODEL HOME

In the Whateley mansion the drama spun by the ancient spider was of a finer texture than the Poet, traveling northward from Toronto, dreamed it to be. The great ironmonger was there, talking down, and with appreciative attention the young woman listened to him, sometimes with a smile too delicate for him to discern in the library's daylight mist, in the soft glow that old books seem ever to shed.

He had come West on business, first of all things, surely. At Gary he had " reviewed " the thundering of creative monsters, the bellowings of earth-shaking blasts, and had discovered that fewer noises were wasted there than in any of the other steel mills of the smoke-belching world. But during more than a week he had surrendered himself not to the demands but to the occasion of sentiment.

In the library, confident and thankful unto himself, he talked of the things that he knew and brushed aside the truths not yet honored with his acquaintance. He sat leaning against a table and at his elbow lay some of the old man's early friends, bound in heavy leather.

" I am indebted to you, Miss Whateley, for, I might say, the pleasantest visit of my life."

" In saying so, Mr. Smill, you add to my pleasure. I thank you."

He picked up a book, looked at it and put it down. " Er — I trust you will pardon my speaking frankly."

"Yes," she said looking him in the eye.

"I was going to say *very* frankly."

Again she said "Yes," still looking him in the eye.

His hand wandered about in quest of another book, found it, brought it around in front of him; then he looked at it and put it aside.

"I have met you several times before the present visit. Four times — perhaps five. And I should think that by now you have become pretty well acquainted with my nature."

Not in the least was she embarrassed, and he seemed rather taken aback that she did not blush a disguised welcome of this marvelous and suggestive news.

"Natures are not short stories to be read at one sitting," she said.

He brightened, "Ah, but a deep book may be read in five sittings."

"And then not understood," she protested.

"Oh, yes, if we read appreciatively," he declared, pleased with his argument.

He was getting close, "warm" the children used to say in the game of "Hide the Switch." She said that appreciation ought to but did not always lend to one a mind wherewith to understand. "And some books, like some natures, are too deep ever to be wholly comprehended."

"Oh, but my nature is not one of them," he said, his countenance brightening.

Of this truth she was keenly aware. He looked as if he were about to pursue this pleasing thought, to become better acquainted with it, and she waited.

"My nature is simple, Miss Rose. I have tried to keep it such. I rejoice that I am practical. I — "

She could not let this pass. "Dreamers discover worlds," she said.

"Very true, but some humorous versifier — forgotten his name — said there aren't any worlds to discover just now. I — "

"Ben King," she said. "He did not awake one morning to find himself famous, but died one night to bring fame to his town."

He bowed. "Yes, I had forgotten. But as I was going to say, I think but don't dream. The dreamer visions happiness that never comes. The idealist lives by ecstatic leaps and eventually falls in the dark. The practical man possesses, and the owners of the earth are more to be envied than the renters."

"The owners are more envied," she agreed, with a smile too faint for him to see.

"And by dreamers," he urged. "There are men who carp at Mr. Carnegie while envying him."

She caught the intent of this allusion. She could hear Howerson's words, "burning out their eyes with gazing into the bubbling metal of the melting pots," and now this man saw her smile but mistook its meaning. "Am I not right, Miss Rose?"

"From your viewpoint, yes," she said. "But such questions are not with profit to be argued. We all of us seem to have made up our minds, we don't know when. I know that to the practical we owe the gathering of wealth, when the dreamer has made it possible, and that wealth beautifies the earth; but the mountains arise in their grandeur and upon them rest the blazing clouds and — "

"And but for the practical mind those of us who are remote could not go to see them. I think you agree with me."

"Let us say that I do. And then what have we arrived at?" She looked at him as if he were a tradesman offering to sell her something. He was educated, learned in a way, wise; but education, learning, wisdom may be dry and awkward in "making love." She resented his want of emotion. Why, a cane-mouthing fop, floating back now from a summer's evening amid vines and beside sleeping water, had shown more of soul. She was waiting, knowing what was coming, half angered by its foreseen dryness.

"We don't seem to be arriving at any definite conclusion," he said, after a long pause. "And I was wondering if I had started in aright. Perhaps not."

He paused again. "Miss Whateley, I am going to be perfectly frank with you, perhaps blunt. As you must know I am a man of large fortune; and, as I believe, you are ambitious to do great good in the world. I can enable you to realize this ambition — I beg your pardon. I am aware that your father is a man of large wealth, and I — "

"You didn't mean to talk to me as if I were a visionary pauper." She laughed.

"Oh, not in the least — not at all. I am talking to you in the full knowledge of what I know you to be, the remarkable daughter of one of the most remarkable of men. And I believe that nature, and opportunity, if you will consent to permit it, design you for some noteworthy purpose. It has been remarked, and, indeed, by some of my friends, that I have made the power growing out of money the ambition of my life. But this is not true. I have other ambitions; and one of them and I may say not the least, is to establish the model home of America, graced by a handsome woman with broad and cultivated intellect."

With a smile she looked up at him as he talked down to her. "A worthy ambition, I think," she said.

By bending slightly toward her he lowered the height from which his words fell. "Thank you. I thought you would agree with me. You know, of course, that Europe casts upon us the reproach that we have no homes. Well, that reproach shall be modified to the acknowledgment that we have at least one home. Permit me to say, *our* home, for you must have — er — surmised by my words that I ask you to help me make it. You will help me to establish this home?"

Again he lessened his altitude, just a trifle, and waited with a smile.

"Oh, I thank you very much for your compliment, Mr. Smill; it was very thoughtful and indeed most gallant of you, but I am so busy now that — "

Up he went to his wonted altitude, as Rose paused trickily to give him the chance to interrupt her. "Is it possible you do not comprehend me? Miss Whateley, I have asked you to be my wife."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Smill."

He gave her a three-inch bow, perhaps three and a half. "Surely you must have understood me all along, must have known why I lingered here in the pleasurable neglect of most urgent affairs. Surely it can't be that you have led me on merely for your own amusement. It may be true that woman at times ridicules almost everything, but I have never known one to make sport of a heart offering itself to her."

The light of mischief faded.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Smill, but I was not supposed to know your intentions; at any rate, not to guess at them in advance."

"I didn't mean that," he spoke up. "I can't very

well say what I did mean — except that you must know that to cover an exposed — ah — tenderness, we catch at an abruptness."

But embarrassment did not long remain upon him. Modesty if poor of purse may splutter a long time, but timidity possessed of millions soon finds its lost head.

"Miss Whateley, I hope you will permit me to say that I am greatly astonished."

He sat high, looking down upon her, with an air that said, "I will hand back the decision handed up to me from below." He resumed: "I am greatly astonished, Miss Whateley, and I request you to reconsider. My friends say that I am not sentimental, some indeed have termed me peculiar, and in a measure both estimates of my character may be true; but did you ever consider what in my mind is a fact: that the sentimental temperament ruins more homes than it establishes? You don't like to think that? No; but I am convinced of its truth. Passion is, I might say, a violence followed by repentance, and repentance of love means the disruption of a household. Temperance, common sense applied to the affairs of the heart, is the home-builder, the home-keeper. Am I right?"

"Wisdom would ask folly for confirmation," she said, mischief again in her eyes.

He shook his altitudinous head. "I am serious; and how can you treat a serious subject so lightly? Please be just with me, and with yourself. Estimate the advantages of the position I offer you."

She smiled up at him. "If you were poor I could listen with more distress, for then you would urge more tenderly."

"Good gracious, Miss Whateley, does a woman wish to be distressed?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"I don't think so; I don't want to think so — don't see why she should wish to be distressed. Is it that she likes to see the man distressed?"

"Yes, and catch distress from him. It is sweeter when caught that way."

"And, Miss Whateley, would you be moved by my —"

"I am sorry, Mr. Smill —" she began in genuine pity at the note of appeal in his voice.

"Then you refuse to be my wife?" he interrupted with a return of his haughty manner.

"Let us say that I decline."

"Oh, what's the difference," he cried impatiently.

"Not much," she admitted, "except that one is more delicate than the other."

"But what will your father say when he knows that you have declined to be my wife?"

He looked her in the eye, and steady-eyed she answered: "He will say to me, 'Eh, what else have you been doing to-day?'"

"No he won't. I know that he will be disappointed. Er — he and I had planned investments. He will take you to task."

"As he did once in Florida when I hooked what must have been the biggest tarpon of the season and let it get away: 'Eh, he had a hard fight and a narrow escape.'"

"Ah, a new turn. Now you compare me to a fish."

"The biggest of the season. You might take some comfort in that. No, I beg your pardon. But, Mr. Smill, you won't let me be natural. Perhaps I am peculiar at my best, but you put me at my worst. I tried to be sad and sympathetic, but you wouldn't let me. Of all

occasions it is the time when woman, educated or illiterate, loves most to shed the sweet tear."

"You are still laughing at me. Most unnatural. . . . Miss Whateley, I must bid you good-bye."

They arose and stood facing each other, unnaturally at ease. He held forth his hand and frankly she met it with her own, permitted him for a brief time to hold it, long enough to say, "You are a beautiful woman."

Gently she withdrew her hand. He lingered, spoke:

"But what can we expect in an age when woman clamors for the ballot? Instead of accepting man as her companion and protector, she spars with him for supremacy; and, Miss Whateley, if the real thinkers among us did not see the grave consequences to which it tends, it would be — I might say, amusing. But why should I wait to hear you speak again, since I know it will be nothing in my favor?"

Again he sought her hand but it did not come forth to meet his own. "But in favor of both of us," she said, and then in solemn voice she added: "I could do you and myself no greater harm than to be your wife. For both of us it would mean unhappiness. The air of the only home in America would be chill and comfortless. You and I could never be companions in silence, and the most serious quarrel is the quarrel when no word is spoken. We — "

"Miss Whateley," he broke in, "who is it that has staged your household? Begging your pardon, but I think I know. I think I have met him, here; and I shall take occasion to say to your father that this phrase-maker will if given the rein, run to ruin with his affairs."

Softly she laughed, and like the notes of the catbird, deep in her throat. "Oh, you mean Mr. Howerson.

But you have turned phrase-maker too. Did you catch it from him?"

"I have caught nothing from him, except this suggestion, that I could in all honesty, and in modesty, too, I hope, give you a word of warning."

"Which is?"

"Beware of him. I am not speaking as a rejected suitor but as a man of the business world. I inferred that he calls himself a poet; and it is the pleasure of the poet to feel that all established order is against him. He makes — the poet in general — a showy virtue of sneering at money, but in private borrows from men he affects to despise and repays them in the coin of ingratitude."

"What phrases!" she laughed.

He bowed. "And if he knows anything he knows that the successful commercial man has a better library, is better read and has seen more of travel than he can in his poverty ever hope to see. Of all husbands, Miss Whateley, poets are the worst."

She assumed astonishment. "Oh, is that true? I thought Pittsburgh steel men were."

He was not offended. "I admit that our class is not above reproach. But we are possible. Poets are not."

He turned toward the door, but she spoke his name and quickly he faced about, eagerness fresh-born in his eyes. "Yes, Miss Whateley."

She dropped him a courtesy in which there may have been a sly mockery. "I did not wish you to go, Mr. Smill — "

"No," came from him with the suddenness of a start.

"To go believing that I agree with what you say about poets."

"Oh!" He drooped — and waited.

"You get from the poet the language in which you denounce him. Without him and his kind there would be no libraries for millionaires to buy, and no travel except in an oxcart. Good-bye."

Thus she dismissed him, and at the same time dismissed someone else, a listener whom she had not seen.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SHE COULDN'T TALK TO HIM

Breathing low and sometimes almost fearing to breathe at all, Harriet had heard Mr. Smill's "tender wooing." She crept out from her curtained ambush, up the stairs to her own apartments, where, angered in soul, she brooded the coming of her husband. She yearned to tell him how great a fool his sister had become, how criminal indeed, since the richer Rose's alliance the more of the old man's estate would be apportioned to Dan Whateley and the boy.

Rose was not much given to song; in the realm of pretentious vocal boredom she was a sufferer; but now Harriet heard her singing, a melodious "simple," *Genevieve,* and the angered woman felt that she hardly dared trust herself at dinner, to see Rose smile at the old man and lightly to joke with him. But she did trust herself, as subconsciously all women know they can; and she outjoked Rose, so blithely had she schooled her temper. Old Calvin beamed upon her, and more than once Dan was moved to mutter that he was "blowed" if he understood it; and in astonishment he listened, wondering what had become of her nerves.

"Father," said Harriet, "I'd like to go into the Cabin with you to-night — and muse."

Harriet sitting in the Cabin, musing! Dan snorted, the picture shot up so suddenly, but she did not fix upon him her look of cultivated reproach; she sugared him

with a smile and said, " I've been thinking about it all day."

Dan muttered that some new-thoughtist must have invaded his bailiwick; and little Calvin cried out, " Ho, mamma, you wouldn't stay in there ten minutes, you know you wouldn't. You'd be scared of the mice. You said all that old stuff ought to be thrown out, you know you did."

Upon him she smiled and sweetly answered, " My dear child, you do not know your own mother."

The old man sat nodding, smiling. " I'd like to sit with you in the Cabin, Harriet," he said, " but unfortunately the fag end of an important matter has dragged home after me."

" Oh, I am so sorry," sighed Harriet, and treacherous Dan winked at his sister.

" Almost any other night," said the old man. " Rose my dear, you appear to be particularly happy. You must have done good deeds to-day."

" Yes, father."

Harriet coughed to catch herself, to stay herself from angered outcry. And there sat her dear child! How could anyone, especially a kinswoman, rob him and call the deed good?

" You must have done something to please you — ha — strangely well," said the old man.

" Yes, father."

And there sat Dan, ignorant that he and his son had been robbed by one of the most gracious of women, a sister and an aunt.

" What have you done to-day? " the old man asked.

" I have been true to your blood and my own," said Rose.

Little Calvin cried with a wave of his fork, " Boy in

the alley named Tonio, and Pete knocked the blood out of his nose, you bet."

Harriet excused herself, went to her room and wept. But she was not weeping when her husband came up, later in the evening; she was in too settled and stagnant a humor for the emotional activity of tears. She was still angry and at Dan. Why, she could not have explained. He had laughed to himself and had muttered "Syrup" when she had been so determinedly sweet — that she was not supposed to have seen and heard — but she had worked up herself against him, if for no other cause than his stupidity. Every woman has the right, under the unwritten constitution of feminine whims, to buck in righteous anger against the dullness of her so-called lord. Why should he have so little respect for his wife as to be stupid toward her? He is not stupid toward business, or toward other women, when it comes to that. Then what moral right has he —

"Dan."

"Yes, dear."

The lawyer had slippered himself and was reading the evening paper. Nothing had been said to warn him of trouble, no look; but from her opposite extremes he had caught premonition, and so now he braced himself with apparent carelessness, and waited.

"Why do you say 'yes, dear,' every time I speak? Do you suppose everyone is like yourself, unacquainted with the meaning of nerves?"

"No, dear."

"Do you think it the proper answer to everything?"

"No, dear."

"Stop saying 'no, dear,' to me, Mr. Whateley."

"I thought it was 'yes, dear,' you objected to."

"I object to both."

"All right, dear; what is it you were going to say?"

"For one thing I was going to say that you've stood by and have seen little Calvin and yourself robbed, and without uttering a word in protest. Our little son, just think of it, that dearest of all little boys. Well, are you going to defend yourself — "

"Let it go by default until I get through with this paper."

"No, Mr. Whateley, this is no time for waiting. I have waited and waited — have done nothing but wait; and you see what's come of it."

"Come of what?"

"Mr. Whateley?"

"Present."

"Are you going to treat me with respect?"

"In a minute."

"*Now,* sir."

She crossed over to him, took his newspaper, folded it and dropped it on a chair. Then she sat down with sighful dignity, such as is often assumed by a weak spirit cut to the hollow. There had been a time when he tried to reason with her, and for his pains had learned that when she struck upon a phrase distasteful to him, that fetched him, so to speak, she would repeat it over and over again, reading in the annoyance of his countenance the proclamation of her own victory. Then he had tried drollery, and he had some sense of it, and had failed. . . . He waited, with a smile. She requested him not to grin at her, and he turned out his light and looked sad. He waited.

"Did you hear me say that you and Calvin are being robbed?"

"Yes, heard something of the sort, but I don't gather."

"I didn't expect you would. She has refused him."

"Beg pardon."

"I say she has rejected him."

"Oh, is that so? . . . Who?"

And now she was pardonable for glaring at him, and in silence seeking the window for a draft of cold air. He waited, feet thrust out, hands in his pockets, in the attitude of threatened whistle. She came back, sat down, and he drew in his feet.

"Can you understand me when I say that your sister has refused to be the wife of Mr. Smill?"

"Yes, perfectly. You mean she won't marry him."

"I am still praying for fortitude. . . . And do you know what it means?"

"No wedding, my dear; no bride's cake for old maids to put under their lonesome pillows."

She was silent, for several minutes, until the lawyer reached over for his newspaper, and then with such sharpness she cried "No!" that he snatched back his hand as if he had touched something that burnt him.

"Let the paper alone. Listen to me."

He nodded that he would.

"If she were to marry him with his more than seventy-five millions, she could not accept any of the Whateley estate. Is that plain to you?"

"As Pike's Peak. But if she has refused to marry him, that settles it. And let me tell you, Madam, as we go along, there's one woman that'll never marry for convenience, position or money. If she has rejected him no power could have forced her to act otherwise. Nobody is robbed. The Whateley estate will be ample for us all. And look here, you persistently forget that I am going to do something on my own account. You don't believe that, do you?"

"Oh, I ought to; I've heard it often enough."

"Too often, maybe, but you must know that law intended as a help toward politics takes time. I am going to be the mayor of this town, then governor of the state, and who knows what may happen after that."

"A great deal will happen before that," she said. "By the time you get ready to run for governor a woman will have gobbled up the office."

"Then let us hope, my dear, that you'll be the woman."

"Just as well hope that as to expect the office yourself."

Little Calvin came in, lonesome wanderer, for of evenings when the old man put schemes to torture in the "Inquisition," the boy was robbed indeed, of story and of play. He was possessed of a small swivel chair, patterned after the quick-turning chair in the old man's office, and thus enthroned the youngster would sit, gazing into the flaming grate, pondering the mighty problems of the universe.

"What have you been doing to-day, Calvin?" the father inquired.

"School," the boy answered, his mind among the stars; and his mother muttered, "Robbed."

Dan took up his newspaper. The boy gazed into the grate. Harriet spoke. "We never can discuss a serious question sensibly, as other people do."

Dan glanced up and down the out-spread page, stripping the columns of their news.

"No wonder there are suffragettes," said Harriet.

"Humph," Dan grunted; "and they make considerable noise except in states where they are permitted to vote. Men are busy passing laws trying to compel them to dress decently, to keep them from exposing them-

selves. They don't have to pass a law to keep a man from exposing himself; but given the rein woman would make everybody blush, except herself. Woman suffrage! Do you know what it would mean? Know what it would do? It would foist into prominent politics two objectionable characters, the preacher and the gambler. The preacher would vote the women of his church, and the gambler would vote the women of the dive. Women! Civilization based on a feather."

"Better on a feather than on whiskey," she replied.

"Oh, good, the climax of argument."

Calvin's mind swept down from the stars. "Aunt Rose is going to marry Mr. Howerson, ain't she?" he said, and his mother, shocked out of her chair, sprang at him, to give him a shake for his inspired impudence, but the father interposed:

"Let him alone. Here," he called to the maid, "put Master Calvin to bed." When the little fellow had been hustled away, his mother, shaking sadly her troubled head, vowed that she did not know what on earth to do with him.

"Let him sleep," said Dan.

"Yes, and that shows just about how much resource you have," she declared. "But if *you* haven't any resource, I *have*. I have found out something and when I tell her, Mr. George Howerson will be only a hired man. . . . I say I have found out something."

"Doubtless."

"But will you listen to me?"

He put down the newspaper. "Well?"

"Do you remember a comic opera singer who didn't have even modesty enough to change her name when she took to the stage, Pauline Howerson?"

"Yes, and a devilish pretty girl, too, and could sing like a top."

From the boy's bedroom came the words, "Tops don't sing; tops hum."

Harriet closed the door, sat down, waited, angered to feel that a recollection of the singer was pleasing to the lawyer. "Handsome as a prize picture," he went on; "and I remember that your brother John just about went nutty over her. Oh, it's a fact."

She was breathing hard at him. "Why remind me of it?"

"I'm reminding myself. I like to think of it. I remember one night we had a little dinner after the show; 'Gene Field, Dave Henderson, and others, poets, critics, and an undertaker or so. Pauline was the thrill of the occasion. Your brother John was then a theological student just in the milk, you might say —"

"I won't listen to you. You never talk unless you have something disagreeable to say. And you have purposely ignored the point of what I said. I tell you, she was George Howerson's sister."

"And I tell you your brother went nutty over her."

"Ah, but he is now a most respectable clergyman, and what did she become?"

"The wife of a lord, I believe. Nothing so un-American in that."

"Yes, his wife for a time! Then what?"

"I didn't keep up with her very well, I admit. She died I believe, at the proper time."

"Died, yes, but not at the proper time — not until she had broken the hearts of her parents. Is it possible you're defending her?"

"Haven't been retained, no. But what about it all?"

"Mr. Whateley, sometimes I actually believe — "

"But don't, my dear. So far, however, as my sister and Mr. Howerson are concerned, there is nothing to it."

They heard Rose singing an old song.

"There *is* something to it, Dan. I believe she loves him."

"Rot. . . . That girl had the most remarkable hair I ever saw. And kick! She could — "

"I won't talk to you."

She went down the stairs and soon the song was hushed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEVER THOUGHT OF SUCH A THING

Rose ceased her song and turned from the piano as Harriet spoke, but her reminiscent fingers still plucked back among the chords, loath to let the melody sink again to sleep. The lawyer's wife could not keep from coming down, she said. The dear old song brought from the past so many blissful memories.

"Sing on, please," she requested Rose, but Rose knew her.

"No, I have sung enough. I was singing only for myself."

"We are happiest, dear, when we sing only for ourselves. And you must have been happy."

"Very," said Rose.

"Thinking of someone, Rose, dear?"

"Not thinking of myself, and that is sometimes a cause for happiness."

Harriet sat down and Rose turned, facing her, waiting, elbows resting back upon the piano keys. Harriet asked if Mr. Smill were gone from town. Rose thought that he was, still waiting. A most remarkable man, Harriet said, with a sigh, and without a sigh Rose agreed that he was. And with all of his millions so learned, Harriet ventured, and Rose nodded. Now Harriet waited but Rose was silent.

"I know your father likes him," said Harriet.

"Maybe so. But why?"

"Oh, for many reasons. He's a great man, for one reason."

"Great man? What has he done?"

"Why, ever so many things. He's immensely rich and he's traveled everywhere."

"That's nothing."

"Yes, but it is something to be able to — to do mighty things."

"But has he done mighty things?"

"Perhaps not as you look at it, but he might, if properly directed!"

"I thought that great men *are* properly directed."

"Oh, they are, of course; but — you know what I mean."

"You mean that my father likes him because of his millions, and that I ought to like him for the same reason."

"Rose, I didn't say that."

"I didn't say you said it; I said that is what you mean."

"And suppose it is; what then?"

"Nothing that I can see. And suppose my father should like him, think the very world of him, what then? Still nothing, so far as I can see. Sister Harriet, I don't think we are talking to much purpose."

Rose got up and walked about the room, returned and sat down in a chair of plushed and easy patience, ready to have it out, whatever it might be. Giving to Harriet an inquiring look she said: "You seem to suspect something."

The lawyer's wife was astonished. "Suspect something! Why I never thought of such a thing. What could I suspect?"

"That Mr. Smill has asked me to be his wife."

"Well, to be perfectly frank with you, Rose — and you know I can be — to be absolutely frank, perhaps I have suspected, or rather let us say *divined* that he has — you know. I say divined because I have no right to suspect."

Her face was shrewd and her eyes gleamed.

"And even if you did divine it," said Rose, "still what then?"

"What then, Rose? Much then, I tell you. If you've declined to marry that man you have made your great false step."

Rose smiled at her, a bright and feminine warfare smile. "There are two bad steps a woman may take: one, declining to marry well, and the other, marrying badly."

Harriet's eyes gleamed, and in her narrow soul she would not have had to search long to find the words, "I thank you for that cue." She smiled, too, and did the natural thing, spoke the words of apparent idleness: "Yes I suppose so." And then with her sweetest air she added: "But I hope, dear sister, you're not thinking of marrying the wrong man."

"Thinking of it?" Rose laughed. "What woman ever thinks she is not marrying the right one?"

"How true," said Harriet with a successful sigh. "How very, very true. And how blind a romantic attachment may be! That is the reason poets never make good husbands. And the more they fail as poets, the worse husbands they become."

"Then true poets ought to make good husbands," said Rose, the smile of warfare gone, mischief in her eyes.

"Yes, I know, dear, but somehow they don't. Do you remember Dr. Henshaw's saying that the truest of all poets died when the writers of the Psalms passed away? A girl friend of mine married a poet. What *was* his name? I can't think. But he wrote beautiful verses. He wrote so well that the breakfast food people employed him to write for them. But he didn't appreciate his promotion. Afterwards he quarreled with his wife, who really got him the job by sending the breakfast food people a sample of his work; and now they are divorced. Ruined her life completely for a time, till she married the lawyer who got her the divorce, and now at last she is happy."

"And with no gratitude toward the poor poet who got her the job," said Rose.

"Oh, well, if you look at it that way, perhaps not. But he might have ruined her life for good and all."

"But as it was he chastened her for the pure happiness to come. All very romantic. And I am to take it as a warning, which I accept gratefully, and assure you that if I should find a poet who looks as if he might be tempted into writing advertisements for breakfast foods I will refuse to marry him."

"Thank you," said Harriet, trying to pump up a laugh, but her pump had not been primed and the effort was a dry failure.

Rose looked at her. "But when are you going to say what you came down to say?"

"Oh, I have said it, dear. The truth is I didn't come down especially to say anything, but to hear your song. But come to think about it, I heard something to-day that will amuse you very much."

"Yes?"

"Very much indeed. You remember that comic opera

singer who used to be a sort of disreputable rage, Pauline Howerson? ''

She shot a quick glance at Rose but the girl met it with a smile. '' Yes, I remember her? ''

'' Do you know who she was? ''

'' Yes, a comic opera singer.''

'' But do you know whose sister she was? ''

'' Why, yes, her brother's, of course.''

Harriet's face sharpened. '' And that brother is George Howerson. You didn't know that, did you? ''

'' Oh, yes I did. He told me the first night he was here; showed me a letter from the poor girl, perhaps the last one she ever wrote.''

Harriet sat back, shoulders drooping. '' You didn't say a word about it.''

'' No, and for the reason, perhaps, that he forgot to caution me not to.''

'' Ah, and now you look on it as a matter of very little consequence.''

'' Well, not with as much concern as you do, Harriet. Are you going? ''

Harriet had arisen. '' Yes, I have nothing more to say.''

'' But perhaps you have.''

Harriet had paused. '' Why do you presume so? ''

'' Because you always have.''

'' I could say a great deal more, but you would treat it lightly.''

'' I hope so.''

''You hope so. And let the rest of us entertain a hope, Rose — the hope that you will not disgrace the family.''

''I am going to sing now,'' said Rose. '' Won't you wait? ''

Harriet was gone.

Old Calvin, closing the door of his "Inquisition," heard his daughter singing. He came to her, put his arm about her. "Sing that again," he said. . . . And in a room upstairs a little boy muttered in his sleep, "Aunt Rose is going to marry Mr. Howerson, ain't she?"

XXIX.

SHE DID NOT EXIST

Collaborator with Fate, the dramatizer of histories and of souls, the little boy was dreaming a play, but the protagonist of his drama was not now buskin-bound, striding in measured and heroic strut. Quietly he was walking about, careless of manner and negligent of dress, seeking information concerning the cost and estimated worth of a monstrous water power plant. For a time there seemed to be no one to tell him anything except that the plant had cost an enormous amount, that with proper management it might have paid, but that a pig-headed company refused to enter into arbitration, closed down and let millions of dollars go to rust. The town was small, a village with city aspirations nipped by premature frost. But about it in all directions lay wild beauty in repose or tumbled in swifts of tempestuous water. There was a lake where a worn-out steamboat dozed in old age, aroused occasionallly from afternoon nappings to take the children and mayhap a stranger down among the narrows. And here among these Rocks of Ages cleft not for the soul of sinner but for the souls of gods, earth opened the shy bosom of her hidden beauty.

Down among those nature-castles, a Venice of eternity, Howerson loitered in a launch, the poet within him alive and thrilled. But he was not neglecting his work; he was putting himself into the channel of exact information. Soon he made a discovery important to him,

that while the Canadian dislikes the American nation and government, he likes the individual American, and that out of his great admiration for Britain and British institutions, there has grown no liking for the individual Englishman.

At the northern edge of the town flowed a river and it was here that the falls came tumbling down, to foam, to whirl and to dart onward into the lake. Here, in the lengthening twilight of the advancing spring, Howerson would stand, musing. One evening he met a man who seemed to know something, a caretaker, and with him he walked about, into the mill.

"How long have you been here?"

"'Ow long? Long enough, sir. I came over with the Company, a mere hoiler of w'eels, sir; but w'en the Company broke up and went aw'y, I was left 'ere to look arfter things a bit. I thankee, sir," he added, touching his cap. Howerson had tipped him.

"How did it all come about, anyhow? I mean the trouble."

"W'y, the Canadian workmen wanted things their own w'y, and struck because old Sir John wouldn't accommodate 'em. Sir John wasn't any too willin' to take up the matter of his own business an' talk it over, an' you may be sure he was slow when they tried to drive 'im. So we closed down, years ago, sir."

"That was Sir John Ferrill, I suppose. And is he in England now?"

"Yes, in a w'y, sir. I mean he lives there, but 'e comes over 'ere once in a w'ile an' just at the present 'e's in Toronto at the King Hedward 'Otel."

In old age plungers grow cautious. It is the old gambler, grown timid, that is bluffed out of the pot; in

really big affairs, such as in battle, the boldness of youth sometimes out-schemes the judgment of age and experience. But not yet had Whateley shown a symptom of poorhouse dread; in his footsteps toward chance there was no doddering halt. This reflection on the poet's part lent boldness, and he mused that it might be well to bring about a meeting between Sir John and the old man; and after Howerson had received a letter from Yal Watkins, the advisory musing became a determination.

"Am settled down into the job all right," Watkins went on to say; "and I guess pretty much everybody's pleased. I know I am. Of course big Wherry did the expected amount of beefing, and he says that no matter who may administer on your general affairs, your 'goat' belongs to him. I hesitate to tell you of my visit to the 'Big Jolt's' office. With my plug hat as bright as a land scheme in the far West viewed from a distance, I felt brave enough to strike a dramatic syndicate for a job as star in an 'Uncle Tom' revival, but for some time after coming down I was too humble to keep my tile on in the presence of a soft-shell crab. I went in and he looked me out into the corridor, looked the nap of my 'dicer' the wrong way; and there I was. But then I gathered that he had told me to go out there, and here I am, with things straightening out every minute of the day and night. But say, old fellow, you must have been pretty badly tangled up with Annie Zondish. She spotted me, followed me and cornered me in a restaurant. Then she gave me a shower of questions concerning you, all leading up toward where to find you; and I lied, not like the devil, for he told truth even on short acquaintance in Eden, but like a tough to his tender sister. I told her you

were gone abroad, swore to it on my honor, for aren't you abroad? It is thus that we lie in intention to tell a truth in fact."

Howerson wrote to Whateley, wrote all day and by lamplight, puncturing the bubble metaphor rising upon the surface of his murky flow of words. Into a corner of the room he threw his pen and went below, strolled out to the river, to drown his own trickling rhythm in the mighty rhythm of the falls; and through the roar there came like a flying splinter the cry of a night hawk, and then a screech owl's creepy call, the laughter of Annie Zondish. Back to the inn he strode, the mists rising from his mind; and he wrote with crabbed clearness, read the letter over and over, astonished with its simple force. But he did not suggest a meeting with Sir John; that was reserved for a future expedient, his aim now being to spar for a few more days of safety.

Then he broke his handcuffs, kicked off his chains and wrote to Watkins, and so long cramped with hypocrisy, his pen now laughed over the page, until it came to Zondish and then — "Now cough," the writer said to it.

"But get it out of your head, Yal, that I've ever been tangled up with her sentimentally. Under some half-insane excitement we might commit a desperate crime with a woman whom we could not be induced to kiss. Like you I am indebted to that strange creature. Say that I owe her my life, that I am ungrateful, a thief; but don't think that I could ever have told that wildcat that I loved her. Love is so glorifying, so truly the God-image held in the soul, that even to whisper a lie about it were a black and damnable crime."

But what was he doing now? He was writing to Rose Whateley; and free was his pen, for it seemed to know that the letter would not be entrusted to the mails but to

the safest of all receivers of the Muse's purloined goods, the flames. He sketched his surroundings, the waters whose depths were as dark as the eyes of an Indian maid, the great rocks whereon the playful gods with diamond points of winter stars had etched fantastic images which with his lightning the critic Jove had half singed out. " But even mighty scenery, as if weary, slopes off to lie flat and commonplace. Poets nod themselves fast asleep, which we could o'erlook if they but dreamed and muttered music in their dreams, like birds, half awake, twittering in the dawn. It seems to me, and surely in my idlest moments here, that virgin songs are hidden in the woods, peeping out, ready to flee, but lovingly in wait for the true minstrel's coming. Logic, philosophy and mathematics sentence the mind to unelastic work, but art comes round as longed-for holiday; and poetry is the laughter and the tear of art, the orator of the soul. Let me further ' silly ' myself:

" Oft when we wake the mind sleeps on
Or else looks up with only one eye ope.
'Tis then we speak the thing we would recall.
'Tis then we dream the dreams whose rosy tints
Turn thin with shame when light of day
Doth pale them weak and vapory. So bold
The mind when curtained by the dark,
So bright by contrast seems the dream we dream
That glamoured, we are wont to think
A poem of rare worth is wrought. Alas
The sunlight brings the blemish out
And, sneering, makes a mock of our poor skeleton.

" With plenty of time for thought and experiment I possibly could do worse than this. But since you are

never to see these lines, why make an apology? Then why write them? To help the drama along, to let you glimpse my mind, not sane beneath your father's commanding eye, but at its most vagrant worst. Isn't it happiness to be pen-free? No publisher's faddish whim to serve, no critic's jaded taste to offend, but to write for the appreciative childhood of — self, and for you, as you do not really exist while I write, except in my own fancy. Thus may I talk to you with as much freedom as I would muse unto myself. But, for you, pliant child of my fancy, I shall show a considerateness, laying you not beneath the contribution of inflated words. How often adjectives are driven tandem with no load behind them. Ah, but why be compact when the leading 'seller' proves the reward of looseness?

"Reading anew these meditations I find them streaked with vanity. Must man find it impossible to make complete subversion of artificial self? Must he ever 'practice behavior to his shadow?' . . . Old Fate with brusque hand will strike these musings out of the drama. I can hear the comment: 'Halts the progress; cripples the interest.' And what can I say? Nothing except to acknowledge truth, which unto ourself is not hard to do. . . . I listen to the far-off wings of the coming dawn. The eagle of light is chasing away the owl of darkness. Gracious lady, I thank thee for thy patience."

CHAPTER XXX.

IN A CREAMY ENVELOPE

He laughed as he put the two other letters into envelopes, laughed with deeper chuckle as he took up the letter to Rose. Then came into his mind the play night in the Cabin, and he said: "I am playing alone, in the midst of this great wilderness; but I make two letters real and of the other a plaything indeed. Here, pretender in art, carry the appearance of truth to the end," and he directed the letter to Rose Whateley and stamped the envelope. Then he laughed his applause, for the curtain had come down at the end of the act; and now to bed in the paling dawn. Until nearly noon he slept; awoke and leaped out upon the floor, refreshed and strong, whistling himself into his clothes, recalling the most of the night as a dream of the night before. Musing that he would hardly dare to read Rose's letter to himself, he approached the table. The letters were all of them gone. And now he went leaping down the stairs.

"By the way," he said to the landlord, striving to be calm, "this morning when I went to bed I left three letters lying on the table."

"Don't worry," the landlord replied. "They're all right. About eight o'clock the watchman over at the mill called to see you. I went up to your room and tapped a time or two on the door. No answer, and I turned the knob. The door opened and in I went — found you asleep, and as I didn't think the watchman's

business important enough to wake you up, I was about to come out, when I saw your letters lying on the table. Thinking you would like to have them go off on the early mail I brought them down, and they're gone all right."

Howerson strode weak-kneed out into the street, turning not toward the river, to seek the watchman, but in the direction of the telegraph office. Arriving there he seized upon a blank and wrote, "Under no circumstances open a letter postmarked this place." Then he mused: "She'll think I'm a fool. She'll show the telegram to the old man and he'll know I am crazy. And both of them will hit it. This thing would stimulate her to read the letter all the closer, twice over. Old fellow, you've made a mess of it this time." He tore up the paper, went out, walking slowly toward the mill. Why not write a simple letter of explanation. Yes, he would do that. Nothing easier than to write a laughing letter guying this little play, all alone in the forest. She could not take offense, for both letters would then amuse her. "Great Caesar, I said that she did not exist except in my own fancy! Nothing to her except what I imagine, the most real of God's creations!"

The mill caretaker had nothing new, angled for another tip, caught it and touched his cap. Now there was naught to do but to wait, the hardest of all labors. Wait for what? The letter from Whateley? That was something his mind could forecast. "The letter from her," he said.

Four days passed and Whateley's letter came. "Make thorough investigation." That was all; and no word from Rose. He had insulted her, called her the shadow of his fancy. He thought of the old Hebrews who on

the desert and in despair, beat their breasts; and he felt that he ought to beat his own, not with his hand, but with a hammer. He strode up and down his room, and upon him came the truth, that he was acting, and he laughed at himself, comedian tittering at tragedian.

On the following day a letter came, warm it seemed, through the chilling mist. He had never seen the character of her pen but he knew it, felt it thrill him as he held the creamy envelope, and then he read. . . . His letter had been so pleasant a surprise, so different from other letters, so inventively free, that she read it to — gods, to the old man? No, to herself, many times. "How novel your device, 'playing like' you were not to send it to me, but if you hadn't I should have been angry with you. How few there are who can write in the way of artistic friendship, in unconscious metaphor." That made him blink. "How few who dream and do not noon-tide their dreams with the dazzle of self-consciousness." He turned back to the first words, which, he feared, in his eagerness he might have overleaped: "Friend Pal." Then he continued to read:

"How rarer the friend than the lover, in fiction and I suppose in life. Once I heard one of father's friends say, 'I used to look at a woman and if she wasn't handsome enough for me to fall in love with, I was then ready to study her and to acknowledge her worthy qualities, and to accept her as a companion.' Wasn't that a heroic conceit? Or was it only masculine? And I wish you could see that man: not possessed of a point on which to hang friendship, no surface roughed with character, but smooth with unvarying vanity. To me the delight of your letter was its inspiring belief that you did not really intend to send it. In this belief was a charm which I feared might upon a second reading evap-

orate like an elusive perfume; and I put the sheets of paper aside, bidding them hold my delusion prisoner. Then came curiosity to tempt me. I wanted to find out whether the notion after all did not live wholly in my own mind; I was dared, would not take a dare and read again; and there it was just as before. . . . You remember, don't you, that I spoke of Col. Banstree? Recently I was at his armory and mentioned your name to him, and his old eyes grew bright. He said that you were one of his aptest pupils. You must go to see him, with me, some time. . . . Little Calvin talks about you every day, every hour, it seems. I think it is much to win the admiration, the real love, of this dear little fellow. The — "

The words were blurred. Much to win his love! It was life, the redemption of soul. He continued to read: "Father says that your letter — "

"What's this?"

"To him is a model of straightforward statement, shrewd with business insight."

Then came the end, a pleasant good night. But why had she so harped on friendship?

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TWO KNIGHTS

Howerson suggested an appointment between Whateley and Sir John Ferrill. Whateley urged an immediate meeting, in Toronto. Howerson conferred with Sir John. It was easy enough to meet him. Not much of ceremony is insisted upon by the man who has something to sell, and the details were quickly arranged. Whateley was to come at once to Toronto. Howerson was to be there, to bring them together, and during an interval of the preliminaries, to conduct Whateley to the Falls.

Within a few days the meeting took place in Toronto, at the King Edward. Now Howerson sat off at the edge of the play, studying the scene. Sir John was not red and heavy; he was frail, an anemic. He knew of Whateley, and was glad to meet him, he said, and perhaps he was.

In the transaction there was much of the "sidestepping" of men seeking to get at each other's weaknesses. One for business thrift had been knighted. The other within himself was an original order of shrewd knighthood. But until Whateley had seen the plant there was not much of vital interest to discuss. He insisted on going up to the Falls; the scene was shifted: exterior view, marvelous background, rocks, mountains, water, villagers agape, a threat of comic opera. Then followed two days of walking about, the two old men apart from all others, sometimes standing above the rushing water, strange figures in the gathering dusk. And now, back

in Toronto, talking apart from the rest of the world, old friends exchanging confidences one might have thought. Once they laughed, shook hands, and Howerson fancied that they must have entered upon some sort of decision.

One evening Whateley said, "We leave for home to-morrow morning, Mr. Howerson."

Home! The word startled him. "All right, sir. I will go now and get the tickets."

That was all. There was no reference to any transaction, until the following day, on the train. Howerson was splashing in the shallows of a magazine, wondering how it was that such verses ever overtook a publisher, when Whateley crossed over and sat down beside him.

"I thought you might like to know something as to the outcome of our negotiations over here, Mr. Howerson."

"I should indeed, sir."

"I shall organize a company and take over that — ha — wonderful opportunity. The site and resources in the way of material render it the chance of a lifetime. And the opportunity lay far beyond the possibility of discovery on my part; it was seized upon by your instinctive business grasp. Little Calvin will have cause to remember you gratefully — ha — and now, sir, to you shall be issued certain shares of stock in this great enterprise."

Down fell the magazine. "No, Mr. Whateley, you must not do that. Really, sir, you don't know how little credit I am entitled to in the matter. You have done too much for me already, and I refuse to accept the shares, sir."

The old man laughed. "Mr. Howerson, you are too modest, and it is only your lack of confidence in your-

self that has held you back from — I might say — a commanding position in the world of finance. In a flash you reach conclusions that take some of us a long time to think out."

They reached Chicago in the forenoon. Instead of going home and inviting Howerson to go with him, Whateley betook himself straightway to his office, to enter at once upon the organization of the Sturgeon Falls Corporation. Howerson went to his hotel and after a time to Whateley's office, where he sat about, feeling like the country boy who, having gone to a frolic, discovers amid neglect and the titter of heartless girls, that his trousers are too short. Over the telephone the old man was talking about millions. "Self-made" capitalists with horny knuckles almost bursting through their gloves came upon hurry call to confer with the "Big Jolt." Howerson walked about, conscious that in this heaviness of millionaire talk he was only a hired man. But not feeling at liberty to go away without telling Whateley whither he was going and that he stood upon call, he re-entered into the atmosphere of eager enterprise, wondering at the keenness of men already more than rich, and some of them surely money-changing on the verge of the grave.

He caught at a brief opportunity to speak to Whateley, and the old man started as if he had been called down from an exalted flight. "Why, yes, Mr. Howerson, you are at liberty to come and go as you please. And when I — ha — need you I will call you up. If you have nothing else on hand come out to dinner with me to-morrow evening at six."

Down into the street Howerson went, breathing delicious air. It was heavy with smoke and black with dust, but a few words spoken by the old man had made

it sweeter than breezes blown from blooming plum trees. Suddenly a flash of red from a woman's hat halted him in his feather-foot speed toward the hotel, and upon him came the weakening dread of Annie and the avenging Agents. But in the big hotel he would be safe, for a time at least, until after he had gone again to Whateley's house, had heard again a voice speak new salvation to his soul.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MIGHT LIVE TO REACH THERE.

As the evening crept on Howerson wondered how he had endured the long time since the day before. He could recall no impression save the continuous dread that he might be killed before the hour set for going home with Whateley. He argued that it would be his luck to die just before that supreme moment. And about the time when he had made himself ready to meet the old man there came a rap on his door. "You have garbed yourself for the long-expected guest," was the thought which like a black swallow flew from the dark through the murky light of his mind and out again into the dark. But he did not hesitate. Dramatically he threw open the door, and there stood a man, in appearance not unlike an avenger, but who inquired whether there were any clothes for him to press. . . . After all he might live to reach Whateley's home. He did.

Little Calvin saw him enter the door, and ran to him with a shout of joy. The Poet knew that someone else was approaching, but he did not look up, hugging the little fellow close; and then his nerves began to sing, for he heard a voice, and as he put the boy down the youngster cried, "You are cold, Mr. Howerson. You shake like my dog when he shivers." Cold, he had been, but now he burned. Full knowledge of all his weaknesses took strong hold upon him, and he felt that all honest eyes must read the bold print of his pretentions, his self-flattery, the difference that lay between him

and men who had tallowed their way to fortune. But when he felt the frank and friendly grasp of her hand, heard the welcoming music of her soft laugh, he could have cried another welcome, the return of his stronger self. And her eyes looked him full of ease and confidence, and he wondered whether down through life he was always to be weak when away from her.

At the table Whateley was full of jests, poked genial fun at Dan, laughed over his recent trip "abroad," mentioning objects and incidents of which Howerson had not supposed he had taken notice. "And, Harriet, my dear," said the old man, "when I told Mr. Howerson I was going to issue him stock in the great concern which — ah — he has brought about, he refused to accept, said that if I did he would make over the shares to little Calvin."

Hereupon Harriet turned from tea to give to the Poet a grateful look; and with a wave of his fork the boy shouted. "Ho, Mr. Howerson give me a wolf coat — "

"Gave, not give, Calvin," his mother corrected him.

"Pete says 'give.' Pete says 'gave' is sissy. And it is, ain't it, Mr. Howerson? "

"I'm afraid it is, sometimes." But not caring to be put down as a false instructor, he added: "However, Calvin, Pete may be wrong a part of the time, at least."

"Yes," the boy cried. "He said you couldn't lick Fitzsimmons and I dabbed mud on his snoot."

Clatter went the old man's knife on his plate and he threw himself back with a laugh. The boy's father laughed too, but his mother surrendered herself to a pinched look that remained long after the talk had wandered to other subjects. After a time, however, the more engaging side of her nature revealed itself. She talked to Howerson about poetry, asked him whether he did

not think that when women were given an equal chance they would take rank with men.

" Poetry is one thing that woman has had an equal chance at with men," Rose spoke up.

" Oh, I don't think so, do you, Mr. Howerson? " Harriet insisted.

As representative of the Muse, Howerson shifted and said, " Woman herself is poetry. She doesn't have to write it, you know. She — " He caught a mischief shaft shot from Rose's eye. " She is the goddess of all inspiration," he went on, bowing to her.

Harriet had heard, she said, that their guest was a poet, ah, so poetic. She would greatly like to hear him give one of his own favorites. She said that at a reception one night she had met a foreign poet. She had met only a few American poets, and never a " home one." Oh, yes, reminded by Rose, the one who developed such aptitude for " ad " writing and another one, presented to her at a dog show. " It was the time when Mrs. Sue Huck's spaniel, ' Geraldine,' was awarded the prize," she said, nodding to Dan; and then with generous contribution she added, addressing Howerson: " This poet at the bench show was introduced as Mr. Josiah Balch, and when I asked him if that were his real name he looked confused. But I never would have picked him out for a poet. He looked more like a — "

" A gentleman," Howerson laughed.

" Well, yes, but really I don't mean it that way. But he was very well behaved. I asked him if he worked for any of the newspapers, and I gathered from his answer that his writing was too fine for such purposes. We asked him to recite for us and he did, but the dogs barked so we couldn't catch his fine shadings. Will you recite for us, Mr. Howerson? "

Old Whateley's shoulders sank with a cowering droop, but they straightened up again when Howerson began to speak. "My dear Mrs. Whateley, I'll gladly rob you a railway train and without compunction shoot the express messenger between his startled eyes but — "

"Gee!" cried the boy.

"But I must humbly bow my determination not to recite. Wait until we go to a dog show, Mrs. Whateley, and I'll outbark the loudest, Geraldine the Spaniel or Big Mike the Mastiff."

Now came Whateley's verdict from which there must be no appeal, no cavil or exception: "Mr. Howerson is a business man, a discoverer and a promoter of the highest order. So far as I am able to estimate, there have been but three or four poets at the most. The world has been rich in — ha — great thinkers, but a poet not only thinks; he sets fire to his thoughts. They blazed in the midnight of poverty and ignorance. But when the sun arose their flames were pale. The poets of to-day are only striking matches in the sun."

"Better to be a firefly in the night," Howerson said in a funless laugh, for beneath the verdict he felt a cool shudder creeping slowly over him. He could have cried out that he did not believe it, that truth and beauty were metered every day and would be until words, squeezed dry, should be but husks; but he knew, also, that men trained in universities for the commercial keennesses of life would look on poetry as dear old nursery tales, all of them told.

In the library old Whateley's talk seemed to tend toward a "Cabin Night," and with that hope the Poet was thrilled, but when the hour had grown soft with jest and friendly confidence, there came an old man with blue veins showing through the red of his jaws. His

mission was to make further inquiry into the aims of the new company. Howerson had the heart to crush the fat and loathsome worm, but soon afterward to bless him. Calvin was taken protesting off to bed, Dan and Harriet withdrew themselves, the inquirer was conducted to the Inquisition, and the Poet was alone with Rose. "God bless the dear old soap boiler," he mused.

"When I was here the last time, the night of a reception, I met a Mr. — what was him name? A very tall man, seemed to be exceedingly well informed."

"Oh," she spoke up after careful research of her mind, "you must mean Mr. Smill."

"Smill? Yes, I remember now. What has become of him?"

"I think he has returned to Pittsburgh. He is very busy."

"Struck me as being a remarkable man."

"Oh, he is — cultivated and endowed with such common sense."

Endowed! That was a fine way to put it. "And not afflicted with too much sentiment," he ventured.

"Oh, no, not at all. He has the exaggerated sanity of the age, no sentiment at all."

He could not keep back "Thank you."

She looked at him and he had not thought that luminous eyes could narrow into a light so sharp. "Thank you for so apt a figure," he said.

The light in her eyes was wide again.

"When he was here last he asked a question that reminded me of the raillery in your letter, Mr. Howerson."

"Please don't speak of that silly screed."

"It wasn't silly. It was delightful. It was so — so unintended. You know that the letter not meant to be

printed is always the best. Then how much more charm attaches to the letter not intended to be read."

He bowed. "I deserve all this; but what was his question?"

"Why, he wanted to know who had staged our household."

He looked at her steadily. "And you could have answered 'Fate.'"

She laughed and he was grieved to feel that she had not received the hoary old word more seriously.

Old Paul announced the Rev. Dr. Henshaw. It would have been a violation of polite custom and a slight infraction of the civil code had Howerson taken the old gentleman by his ears and hauled him out. Rose might have been startled and Dr. Henshaw himself might have been astonished, but in his soul the Poet believed that God granted to him that right.

"My Dear Mr. Howard — Howarton, I am delighted to meet you again," and with a three-quarter turn from the Poet he gave to Rose his light gray smile. He scoured his palms together, washing his hands of the Poet's presence, but turned slightly about when Rose addressed a remark to the neglected one, and out of the corner of his mouth gave to him the delayed remnant of a smile. Then he leaned back in his chair, anchored for the evening. He appeared so comfortable that Howerson dared the hope that he might recall one of his own sermons and drop off to sleep. But not the doctor; he was too much given to talk.

"I think," said he, "that we may confidently look forward to a very, *very* successful year." Then turning about and presenting graciously one half of his countenance to Howerson, he added, "Yes?" as if he expected enthusiastic confirmation. Howerson knit his

brows, dropping a stitch, and replied unconcernedly that he supposed so. The doctor was a little annoyed that he had not *hoped* so; and the man who made faith a trade now looked an inquiry at the Poet. "We must work to save souls, Mr. Howerson." He had hit upon the name.

"We must work, sir, to save bodies, and a saved body may mean a saved soul."

Rose smiled and the doctor hemmed and hawed up a platitude, sanctioned by old men looking for a soft spot in eternity and women who take Gospel and scandal for granted. "Ah, my dear sir, the body is for this world, corrupt; but the soul is for God." And with this squelcher he gave a gleam of gold set in a false tooth. "Man is — "

"Man is dramatized," said Howerson.

"Beg pardon."

"Dramatized and didn't dramatize himself. I wouldn't give a whoop for all your free moral belief. What, a moral agent for a few years, with eternity behind and before you? "

"Ah, but such discussions are, I might say, fruitless. Our dear Miss Whateley could never believe — "

But bolder than she had been if alone with the Poet, Rose shut off the preacher with, "I believe my mind is kin to Mr. Howerson's. I have felt it all along, since the first day I met him. He is my brother of the drama."

"Ha, such skepticism of the real truth rolls across the sea of life in waves, leaving on the distant shore no echo of its ripple," declared the doctor. "I hope I am to see Mr. Whateley this evening." Doubtless he was, for at that moment they heard the old man and his inquisitorial visitor talking down the hall toward the front door. A few moments later the master of the

house came in. He shook the doctor's hand with his usual warmth or rather his usual want of it, and hoped that the good man was still strong in the fight. Henshaw, rubbing his hands so vigorously to prove his strength that he popped a knuckle, declared himself in better form than he had ever been before. His mind was so much clearer, his facts so much more abundant, that he was able, he might say, to ring harder blows on old Satan's mail than he could possibly have dealt in the less equipped years gone by. Then suddenly he seemed to recall a former impression, that in Whateley's estimation Howerson stood high. Toward the Poet he turned the manner of repentence, spoke to him soothingly, was glad that dear Miss Whateley had found in him a brother; and from this bungler Howerson's look was quickly shifted to Whateley's countenance, but the old man had been dull to the doctor's remark.

"My very dear Mr. Whateley," said Dr. Henshaw, "I have just had a talk with the celebrated Mrs. Jane Penobscot Barnes."

"Who is she?"

"What, Mrs. Jane Penobscot Barnes! She is the world's leading suffragette, from England."

"What's she doing over here?"

"Why, my dear Mr. Whateley, she is furthering the cause. Make sport of it as we may, one day that cause will ride triumphant over the jeers of men."

"One day. And where will it ride the next day?"

"On the billows of eternal right, Mr. Whateley."

"Maybe so. And then good-bye to civilization."

"Why, my dear Mr. Whateley, you astonish me — and in the presence of one of the most — er — charming of her sex. Why, really, you almost shock me."

Rose laughed and Whateley crossed his legs. "I

don't want to do that, Doctor. But perhaps some of your beliefs might shock me — my intelligence, for instance."

The doctor winced but smiled and said "Yes?"

"Decidedly. Now I don't believe that man has made a complete success of civilization, don't believe he ever will, but — "

"But with woman to help him," the doctor interrupted, while Howerson sat there wishing all discussions sunk to the bottom of the sea.

"Woman to help him make a completer failure. Doctor, the pretty little duplicities of woman, her nature-endowed defences against man — "

"She couldn't do worse, Mr. Whateley, than to buy her way into the Senate."

"No, but she might try to flirt her way in."

"That wouldn't cost the state anything."

"Cost the world her romance and her sentiment," Howerson protested, and Whateley gave to him a gracious nod. The doctor, now thoroughly girded, not only stood braced for the shock of attack, but led an assault. He fought for woman, blessed, trampled-on but still gloried woman. And during the jolt and clamor of strife Howerson plucked the chance-flowers of a few words with Rose, but he felt that in Whateley's gracious nod there was a kindly dismissal and he arose to take his leave. "The two old roosters," as he had mentally termed them, were so rough-feathered of neck, and so spur-whetting of heel that they scarcely took heed of his departure. But Rose went with him to the front door.

"Such contention is not native to our play," he said, lingering, looking back. "It slows the drama where it ought to be swift."

"Our drama," she laughed. "In our drama we ought always to be made to feel that something vital is about to happen."

"Yes, in our — our kin-drama," he said.

They heard the muffled strike and the fluttery rebound of the old roosters. They heard the church cock crow as if he must have torn a wattle, and then they heard him squawk. But the real drama hung dreamily about the front door. One word might have made it leap, but that right word the grim old time-mocking Dramatist withheld. . . . And mute they stood as if listening to music lisping from some distant and lonely lover's flute.

"Oh, in my letter I spoke of seeing old Col. Banstree again and of his speaking so kindly of you."

"Yes, I remember."

"Would you care to go over to his armory to-morrow afternoon?"

"Nothing could give me more pleasure."

"Then I will meet you here, at two o'clock," she said, with a kindly nod of dismissal.

CHAPTER XXXIII

COLONEL BANSTREE

In his room the Poet mused: " If Yal were here I'd wager him Arcadia against old Crusoe's isle that those Dogs of Corinth mouth me before to-morrow afternoon. I used to live from shaky hand to eager mouth, but now — from trembling heart to frightened soul. But let us have no moribund rhapsody, old man." He sat down to read, betting with himself he'd find old Rousseau dull, which he did. Sharper the bite and pinch of fear than any book ever written, and heavy dread makes all books seem the heavier. But now as he let the volume fall he knew that it was not the fear, the dread of Annie and the Agents that oppressed him. It was the ache of being only a brother. " But, fool, you couldn't even dimly hope to marry her, could you? " he asked of himself, and answered, " Old Yal said it was in the drama."

Morning came and the sun at the window found him alive but worrying again with the first wink of waking. He spent the forenoon in looking for a room. In an old building hidden among warehouses not far from the river, he settled on a large apartment which years ago might have served some bachelor of taste, for though the walls were not free from grime, the design of painted decorations could still be followed, a Spanish youth singing beneath a window. From the ceiling hung a chandelier so massive and so ornate, so out of atmosphere, as to suggest that some old mansion had been drawn upon, the bronze display of some owner or tenant coming after

the sojourn of the tasteful decorator. Adjoining was a small bedroom, in one corner a sheet of tin nailed presumably over a rat hole. But the floor was sound and reasonably clean except about the grate fireplace, which bore marks of bohemian cookery. The main room had also a fireplace, a black marble mantelpiece and above it a forgotten portrait of an old man dreaming by the fire, arm hanging limp and pipe gone out. This room was on a corner at the intersection of two corridors, with a door opening out into each hallway. It was only one story up and upon the whole was the secluded place pictured by the Poet. And now for a special telephone wire. At noon he found Whateley in his office and requested the permission to put in the exclusive service. The old man looked sharply at him.

"It is because I don't wish to be called up idly, Mr. Whateley."

"Yes, a good idea, Mr. Howerson. Have it attended to at once."

So that was settled; and now, to wait for two o'clock, which surely could not come. All the clocks would stop. Time itself would stagger and fall dead; and in the street newsboys would cry "All about the death of time!" Maids would weep and old men with notes in bank would laugh and shake their winter heads. But it was better to walk about in the neighborhood of the Whateley home, to be near at hand in case Time should survive; and he hung about a tower on which there was a monstrous clock, with a great bell that clanged out "one" and moaned, for that was to be the last. But the minute hand was still alive, convulsive after the death of his brother, the heavier recorder. Soon it would die too. What? — one thirty? A miracle surely.

Slowly he strode toward Whateley's house, and after turning back occasionally as if he had lost something, reached there just in time. Rose was ready, and unconcernedly she came out with him, little suspecting the danger out of which the world had just emerged.

Old Col. Banstree's armory was not far off and of this fact Howerson had been warned, but they came within sight of the place without having said anything to "advance the plot." In another moment there they were, in Banstree's museum of swords, all sorts, hefty slashers from the middle ages, boudoir splinters of death from politer times, down to the sabers that flashed with Forrest and with Sheridan.

There was the old man, past eighty, towering, with a wrist of iron and an eye of blue steel. He gripped Howerson by the shoulders and turned him about to catch a better light; he laughed over him, and poor old eighty years of human nature was here suspected of exuberant gladness toward the Poet on account of the company he was keeping, for surely in that former day when the actor had come to receive a groat's worth of skill, the colonel though kind had not made so much of him.

In the presence of ladies the colonel would have set a sixteenth century knight the task of looking to his laurels, and as he regarded Miss Whateley as the queen of all women, proving by notebook and memory that he had met them all, he now was first gentleman in the gorgeous court of self-conceit. Strange nomad of fortune was this old man, choosing with mystery to keep himself interesting, a book of adventure glimpsed into but never read. Native of Norway, fencing master in many lands, soldier for love of glorified strife, a companion of Maximilian in ravished Mexico, galloping in

the vanguard of revolutions through South America. It was even hinted that he had stolen a princess from the throne-room of the czar, but when asked directly he would shrug his high shoulders. "Ah, my life has not been free from episode."

Howerson stood by and watched Rose fence with him, thorn tree and althea swept by a gale; but when this figure had passed through his mind, leaving him saner to judge of the picture, he knew that never before had he seen such contrasts of grace. When the combat was over, the colonel removed his silk skull cap and bowed his hairless head almost to the floor. It may be hard, as all stage managers believe, for bald-headed men to be dignified, without a hint of comedy, but old Banstree broke through the ruling and stood a statue of perfect gravity, as long as he was silent; but when he talked, and it must have been due to his animation, his scalp appeared to glisten anew, to laugh. Then it was that sceptics smiled and questioned his theft of a princess.

"I call her the wonder-lady, Mr. Howerson. Ah, where can you find such grace? And with such skill! I have taught her, I of the generations gone; and you must know, my old time friend, that when man in society unbuckled his belt and laid his sword aside, the true gentleman departed forever. Come, take the foil and assume your neglected accomplishment."

"I am more than rusty, Colonel, and I'd be ashamed for Miss Whateley to see my clumsiness."

"After having been charmed by her grace. Ha, yes. But you will come and let me teach you. You were an apt pupil. You would have made your mark. You will come soon?"

"Yes, very soon, Colonel. I don't hope to make my mark, but I like the exercise."

" Ah, yes. You see what it has done for Miss — I mean what Miss Whateley has done with it. Have I not a pleasant place here? " He turned about and waved his hand toward a window looking out over a vacant space toward an old-fashioned mansion now an automobile club, and a barn that looked like a chapel.

" Here on the first floor, as you see, low, where the smell of the sod reaches me when the rain falls. And here, Miss Whateley, where your gracious kindness enabled me to be installed, I expect, if permitted to remain here, to live to be a — may I say a hundred, Miss Whateley? "

" Oh, yes, surely a hundred, Colonel. Why should you expect to be cut off in your prime? "

The old man bowed to her. " Prime? Ah, not quite but almost. But for my — my experience, I should feel not the half of my years. Men have premonitions of death, Mr. Howerson, but I have premonition of long life. I shall not die before one hundred, and — ha-ha — I shall then decide whether I desire to live longer. Is not that a good joke, an epigram? Ah, I have a present for you, Mr. Howerson. Look! "

From the wall he took down a broadsword of very ancient make, and as he drew the blade from the scabbard and flashed it in the air, he said, " Has it not slain the Turk? And as bright as a mirror. My friend of the old time, it is yours to take away with you. Put it on your wall, and — ha-ha — when you look at it, come to the old fencing master who shall live to be a hundred, and take a lesson. Here, it is for you."

" Oh, no, Colonel," Howerson protested; " I should feel that I had robbed you."

" Well, then I insist on being robbed. Ha-ha — is

not that another epigram? Ha, it all comes from my activity. Miss Whateley, do me a favor: Tell him to take it."

"Take it, please, Mr. Howerson," she requested, seeing that the offer was sincere, though perhaps she did not know that her own friendship for Howerson had prompted it.

Now it was time to go. At half past three Rose had an appointment at home, she said. Again they were out in the open, walking slowly, talking about the old swordsman who, loath to see them take their leave, had ceremonied them to the street. She chatted lightly of little things, and laughed the while, and he laughed too, though neither could have told the reason. Love is sometimes closest and dramas often speed the fastest when with no thought there is only prattle. Hearts can sometimes be fondest when lips are foolish.

They walked and laughed; and Cupid, the little fool, did not snatch the prompter's book to interpolate a cue. A corner turned, and there was the great house ready to swallow up another opportunity. Suddenly the Poet's mind halted, though his physical self strode on in swing with the long and slow stride of the woman. Opportunity for what? To make dishonorable avowal of love or honorable confession of an oath. That oath, how long ago! Now, again it came out of the past like a remembered disease. But this was not the time for that confession. What was it the time for? Delay. The glamoring mists cleared from his mind and he knew that the soul-kin play could lead only from nothing to naught. "Then what are you yearning for, you idiot?" his heart inquired while his lips spoke out idly and in laughter; and the answer was there before the question

had been asked: "To tell her that I love her, to seize her for a moment in my arms, feel Jove's lightning strike, and then to run away."

And now they stood in front of the big iron gate, he holding it open. "I have enjoyed our visit," she said, her eyes smiling. "It was a rollic all the way home, the freest journey I ever knew." She laughed, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OLD SAM

Like two children coming home from school the "pals" had parted, and with no word spoken in allusion to the future, no hint as to an early meeting. Poets are adventurous, not to say sometimes presumptuous, but he had not yet dared to call at the house, not invited for the occasion and offering no other excuse than his desire to see Miss Whateley. They must continue to meet, if to meet at all, by a sort of theft; and often he was hurt by the thought, edged sometimes to the sharp belief that in this theft might lie her enjoyment of his society.

The room in the old building had been fitted up, the special wire installed. The walls were washed, the floor carpeted, and here with table beneath the chandelier, the Poet sat down among books to read, to muse and to plot. Sometimes he would take the old broadsword down from the wall and with it make the air shrill with the whistle of his stroke. A week passed with no commission to go out of town. But now he did not wish to go away. His heart yearned for another invitation from the old man, and several times he hung about the office, waiting; but Whateley was always busy, and aside from a kindly and respectful greeting had little to say to him.

One day as he was coming down out of the office the notion to call on old Banstree struck him; and he smiled

in pity of himself that he had so long put off the taking of a lesson, for at the armory he might meet Rose. He hastened along the street, wondering why he had not sooner snatched at this chance, when there came a quick clap on his shoulder; and leaping about he stood facing Sam Joyce, the old Sam of the vague but now happily recalled ancient day at Glenwich.

"Your house afire?" Joyce said, laughing, as Howerson gripped him by the hand.

"Sam — I'm glad it's you." And he was. "How are you, old man? How are you?"

"If I felt better I'd have to take something for it," Sam said, shaking his friend's hand, holding it off to one side, bringing it back and shaking it again, while upon him the Poet poured the glow of friendship and of gratitude. An onlooker might well have taken them for twins of sentiment and of sacred purpose reunited after many years. But friendship is sometimes as much a matter of moments as of years. The years may be fruitful in the discovery of the antagonisms of character, while the hours may bring out congenialities.

Joyce was in for a time, he said, waiting for the Western hat trade to halt and blow a while in its uphill pull. "I believe I told you before that about as unwise a thing as a traveling man can do is to overstock his customers. Recognize the truth with them that times are dull and are likely to be duller. Don't wait for your customer to compel you to see the handwriting on the board fence. Seeing it before he does is good policy in trade. Let's turn in here and get a bite to eat. I'm as hungry as a shark."

They went into a restaurant, where amid the noontime clatter Joyce resumed his commercial homily. Some time elapsed before Howerson was sufficiently

recovered from his shock to speak except in broken rhapsody of his "delightful surprise."

"But why were you in such a rush, old boy? You jumped like a movie when it strikes a gap in the film."

"I was thinking about — "

"A footrace. I see. Say, but you did raise Cain out at Glenwich. Every man that owns a patch of dog fennel out there thinks he's a millionaire. You've made the old burg hump and no mistake. Whenever you want a banquet, drop off the train out there. And, by the way, you've done me no end of good, for being a friend of mine you've boomed my trade. The biggest merchant in the town, one that I've been trying in vain for years to land, came over to the hotel the other day and surrendered of his own accord. Why, it's money in a fellow's pocket to be on speaking terms with you, George. What are you going to eat?"

Howerson gave his order and then turned to his friend. "What I owe to you it would be impossible for you to understand. I hinted at an explanation, could only hint at it, and am not going to do even that much now. With a certain object in view I am going to ask you a few questions. Are you tired of the road?"

Joyce cleared his throat. "Was a harnessed dog ever tired of a churn? Was an old knock-kneed mule catching sight of a green pasture far way, ever tired of the treadmill? Tired! Lord! Perhaps you don't know what it is to put up with the snarls of an ignorant grouch, sitting in his back room, hating all the world and you in particular when you come in to extend your trade. Maybe you don't know what it is to have your education and your manhood continuously insulted. You may not know what it is of a Christmas Eve to sit in a miserable railway station away out on the snow-

covered plains, with your heart full of a beautiful woman and two glorious kids at home. . . . This meat pie's been near the fire."

Howerson's hand lay for a moment on his friend's arm, an unconscious caress. "You have made me know, Sam," he said. "And it must not be."

"Got to be for years yet, George."

"Until when?"

"Until I can buy into the firm."

"How much?"

"Oh, not so very much, but it will take a long time, for I'm not of a saving nature. Ten thousand dollars."

"You shall have the money to-morrow.

"Look here, George, what are you trying to say?"

"To-morrow. I will borrow it from Mr. Whateley."

"But good Lord, man, I couldn't pay it back in —"

"You will pay it back when it is due: in one thousand years. You can't get away from it. I've thought about it many a time. It's in the drama. I have, let us say, blundered into making good for Mr. Whateley. And he is appreciative. It will be an advance on my salary; and after this year, old man, I shall be receiving at least twenty-five thousand annually. Don't stare at me, Sam. Steady yourself and take things as they come. I've had to do it. What's that? I haven't known you but a short time? Puck said what fools. He ought to have added what liars. I've known you all my life, or rather since my resurrection — when my life really began, but of course you aren't supposed to understand. I shall have that money for you to-morrow and you're going to take it."

Joyce was honest, a reason doubtless why he had not been able to enter the firm years before. He steadied himself as commanded, but with a protest, admitting,

however, that Howerson had flashed before his eyes his own bright dream.

"Lord, the wife would be tickled, and the kids — George, you've got to come out with me, as soon as you can. . . . I can see them all dancing around the room, holding hands. I'm not much given to sentiment; I feed more on crust than mush, but some things get me and get me hard. . . . I can pay that money back. . . . I'll take it, George."

Howerson sprawled back with a laugh so loud that women stenographers, prim and circumspect over their public coffee and pie, looked around at him. "Take it? Why there has never been any question as to that fact. It was recorded in the book with the first tick of time. Come along with me," he added as they arose. "We are going to see a character in a romance of many nations."

As they walked along Howerson told him about old Colonel Banstree. They got into a car, rode until near the house of many swords, then proceeded to walk, Joyce inwardly accounting himself the happiest man in town. What a surprise for his wife and the kids! No more desperate Christmas Eves on the snow-shrouded plains. Howerson was talking:

"The old man says he's going to live to be a hundred, and I believe it. So will you believe it when you see him. He has a premonition that he must round the moss-covered corner of a century."

"But if he is already eighty it may be the vanity of having lived so long that inspires his premonition," said Joyce.

"Yes, it may be vanity," Howerson admitted, "but nothing lives longer than vanity, you know. It has been

said that a man lives about as long as he cares to. In the desire to live there is life."

"If that's true," said Joyce, "you may put me down for a couple of centuries. I never was keener to live than I am to-day. And you are the cause of it, old man. That ten thousand — I can hardly realize it; it's a dream, and pretty soon I'll wake up out on the road. There'll come a loud thump on the door and a gruff voice will call out: 'Four fifteen!' and then I'll get into an old bus and rattle off to the railroad station. But I'm going to live in my dream as long as I can. . . Suppose Whateley won't let you have the money?" he broke off suddenly.

"Don't worry. He won't refuse me."

"He might. A hope may open the door of a guy's freedom and yet he's half afraid it's locked. Hope may be brave, but it may also be streaked with yellow, you know. It isn't often I'm a coward, George, but cowardice grabs me once in a long while. . . . We'll make that note for a year. I can do better when I drive down a stake to work up to. I'll pay some every year and renew the note."

"Without interest," said Howerson.

"But don't you think it would strike Whateley as being more businesslike if it should be an interest-bearing note?"

"My dear Sam, Whateley has nothing to do with it. The thing is settled. But what you said about hope just now is true. When we hope, the soul has turned gambler, and sometimes the soul coppers its bet."

It was not long at a time that the great engine of health pumping within would permit Joyce to be low and anxious of spirit. The man who glamours other men can nearly always glamour himself. The man who

sells gold bricks of cheerfulness is likely to reserve one of them. Like a lark, Sam's spirit arose and sang.

The Poet's hope was that at the armory he might meet Rose. Herald of this hope was a robin's song. And in Rose's treatment toward Joyce, his friend, he might see reflected her regard for himself. "Tricky art thou in thy sublime selfishness, O Love!" he mused and thought himself wise. "And for the most part thou art shrewd, but sometimes thy devices are as glaring as the paint on Harlequin's jaw."

Upon coming to the armory they found the janitor standing on the steps, smoking his pipe, while in the hallway his wife was scolding a boy for tracking the floor with mud. Recognizing Howerson as a companion of Miss Whateley, the janitor took off his cap and bowed himself aside to let the visitors enter.

"Is the colonel at home?" Howerson inquired.

"I think so, sir. I'll see." Along the hallway he came with the visitors, talking for a tip. "Fine weather we are having, sir, especially for the time of year."

"Anybody taking a lesson?"

"There might be someone — a lady, perhaps, you know, sir. I thank you, sir." Howerson had tipped him.

By this time they had reached the fencer's door. Howerson listened for the click of the foils, his heart beating hard. Out in the open the robin was singing. "He knows that we are to meet here," the Poet mused. He knocked on the door. No sound within. He knocked again. No stir. The robin sang. The janitor's wife came forward, halted, smiled at the Poet. "He must be out, but I've been down here pretty much all day and didn't see him go," she said.

"It ain't locked," the janitor declared, turning the knob. The door opened part way. The janitor peeped

in and sprang back — "Good God!" The woman, quicker than Joyce or Howerson, looked in and drew back, screaming, her hands pressed to her eyes. The door now stood wide open, and the two friends gazed upon a horrible sight. The old man sat with his arms on a table in front of him, and with his head split straight down between his eyes, a great gash like a smear of red paint. His eyes were open, startled; and in one of them a drop of blood, a crimson tear.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A DOG HOWLED

The body was not yet cold, and when by accident a chair was overturned, the slight jar caused the wound to bleed afresh. The room was orderly, the swords all in their places. The windows looking out across the stretch of lawn were all of them down, the catches fastened. These observations were taken quickly by Joyce, who was cooler and calmer than the others. Then he turned to the janitor and commanded him to telephone to the police.

The screams of the woman called down sojourners from the upper floors, and they stood about the door, whispering their horror. A dog came and stood with them, and when he saw the bloody sight, threw up his head and howled. A woman drove him out. She had heard him howl the night before, she said, and knew then that something awful was going to happen in that house. Near a window Howerson stood, pale and shaken. This one time mimic was looking now upon the smeared features of a real tragedy, but it was not this alone that racked him; his heart had beat cold with Sam's words "telephone to the police." These words meant the publication of his name. They meant that he was to be summoned by the coroner, that the "Agents of Justice" would find him. He heard the janitor talking over the telephone. There was no escape.

The janitor came back from the telephone booth. "They'll be right over," he said. "And I'd like to see how they'll go about finding out anything. Why, gentlemen, as God is my judge I see the colonel walking in the hall not an hour ago, and see him go into his room, and I know I wasn't away from here across the street more'n ten minutes; and my wife says she didn't see anybody come into the building while I was gone."

"I wonder," said Joyce, "if anyone could have been fencing with him and split his head by accident."

"No," said Howerson. "There's not a man in the world that could have come down across his head. He could foresee an accident as well as a design. And he couldn't have inflicted such a wound himself."

They heard the gong of the patrol wagon. "George," said Sam, "the poor old colonel ought to have played his premonition with a copper."

"Yes. But his premonition was only a part of the game, the mocking jugglery of Fate. That," he continued, with his eyes fixed upon the old man, "does not weaken my unfortunate conviction but adds to it, and before long you may see something that I cannot see, and then you will recall these words."

The police entered the room. Everyone was commanded to remain until all names were taken; and when Howerson had given Whateley's office as the place where at any time he might be found, his questioner eyed him sharply, and forthwith treated him with more respect than in gruff haste he had set out to show. Now the Poet's blood tingled with a sudden thought: To Whateley's home he would be the bearer of this distressful news. He would see Rose. Then he explained to Sam, "I am going over to Whateley's for a very short time. I feel it my duty to go, but an unpleasant

one, I assure you. Miss Whateley was very much attached to the poor old colonel — but you understand," he broke off, hoping that Sam didn't.

"Certainly," said Sam.

Thus assured that his friend did not understand, Howerson continued: "Stay here, Sam, till I come back. Of course I'm not going to bring her here; I'm going over there only because — but you can understand."

Sam said that he could, and Howerson hastened away with winged spirit though with clod-stumbling heels, he felt. When he had rung at the door and stood listening for old Paul's slippered shuffle, he could hear nothing save the beating of his own heart; and he thought of an imprisoned hawk fighting its cage. Paul opened the door, looked at Howerson, drew back. "What has happened, sir?" he inquired with a gasp.

"Oh, nothing — that is to say, nothing has happened at the office. I wish to see Miss Whateley for a moment."

"She is not at home, sir. She hasn't been gone long, sir — went out with a party of ladies and a gentleman in the auto. Any word you wish to leave?"

"Well, perhaps not. The evening papers will inform her that her old friend Colonel Banstree has been murdered."

"Is it possible! Very unfortunate, I'm sure. Board of trade man, sir?"

"Good Lord, no. The old fencer."

"Ah, yes, I might have thought so, but you see, sir, I never heard of him. Anything else, sir?"

"Nothing. Good day."

Sam was waiting and together the two friends strode slowly back toward the car line, interviewed on the way by reporters. Sam was voluble, Howerson reserved; and

to those who write the local history of the hour, restraint on the part of the questioned is sometimes a food more stimulating than loquacity. Suggestion is richer than explanation.

" I notice," said Sam, " that you didn't tell them where you live. Surely yon don't sleep at Whateley's office."

" No. I have a sort of monastery all my own, and for reasons — same old story, can't explain — I don't want a certain part of the public to know where I live. As yet I have confided the secret of my abode to no one, but I'm going to take you with me now."

" That's a compliment all right."

" It's a confidence, anyhow; and if anyone should be interested enough to ask you if you know where I live, lie like a friend and say you don't."

" I'm an oyster," said Sam. " They may swallow me, but I peach not."

When they entered Howerson's apartments Sam called the place a hillside cave. " With a club I suppose you slew the former possessor and dragged him out. Or with that blade up there," he added pointing to the sword on the wall."

" Sit down and fill a pipe. That sword was given to me the other day by the old colonel."

" Yes? Well, let it hang there. I haven't much interest in swords. Give you this old pipe, too? "

" No, I picked that up in Canada. Try this one — and some good tobacco."

Sam smoked, mused and said: " George, I am still in my dream."

" I am not the one to call ' four fifteen ' at your door," Howerson replied lightly, though his mind was busy with dreams of a darker hue.

Sam filled his pipe again, seeming loath to leave the Poet, the embodied presence of his hope. For a long time they talked, Sam in his pleasurable dream, Howerson in his nightmare.

"A part of our dream to-day was red, Sam," said the Poet, a vision of the old man rising before him.

"Desperate. But do you know that while looking on that poor old fellow's blood, the blood of your friend, I couldn't help thinking of what you were going to contribute toward my welfare? Blood and death — murder, yes; but you were going to help me. George, we are woefully selfish creatures."

"We make blood our agent," said Howerson; "an excuse to further our desires. I wanted to go to Whateley's house, and made murder my excuse. But of course you can't understand."

"Maybe not. But you'll let me be selfish and dream for a moment longer, won't you?"

"Yes, but let us hasten the plot. It drags." There was a smoky silence, broken by Sam.

"When shall I meet you to-morrow, George, about the note, you know?"

"Yes. I had been thinking of other things, but I hadn't forgotten that. See your people, then meet me here to-morrow afternoon at one o'clock."

When Sam was gone, the Poet sat musing: "I'll get a pistol and prepare to defend myself. Those devils will see my name in print, follow me to the inquest, track me here, hack out my blood as some other devil hacked out old Banstree's."

The sight of the murdered man arose afresh, more ghastly visioned now in the twilight of a room which no blaze could have made cheerful. . . . He did not sleep well that night, and in dozes he dreamed a dozen

times that he snatched down the broadsword to slash off the heads of his enemies.

He went early to Whateley's office, and while waiting for old Calvin, cringed and coughed over those wretched newspaper interviews. One server of the morbid public called him "George Howerson, the Actor-Poet" and printed one of his poems. Where had that thing been dug up? But there it was in double column, together with a sketch of the Poet "whose peculiar imagination induced him to turn promoter, and who of late has engineered some of Whateley's biggest deals." Where had the scoundrel got that information?

He heard Whateley coming, not through the anteroom guarded by Big Jim, but through the adjoining apartments. He heard him following his blazed-trail of ill humor, heard bookkeepers begging his pardon for being alive, and thought that he caught the timid accents of Miss Gwin's fright. Taking hasty stock of himself, he found that he was not so brave about that note for ten thousand.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Howerson. You are rather early."

"Good morning, Mr. Whateley. But isn't it you, sir, who are rather late?"

This was so bold that Miss Gwin, who had appeared just within the door, shrank back to avoid the storm; and the Poet, whose lines descriptive of "The Maid Who Danced in the Barn" were now spread on the old man's desk, was startled at his own want of tact, so much so, in truth, that he was groping for the fitting words of apology when Whateley snapped his watch.

"That is true, sir. I am at least twenty minutes behind my usual time." He sat down. "Anything special, Mr. Howerson?"

"I should like to speak to you privately," said Howerson glancing toward Miss Gwin, who had entered the room, the old man no doubt having commanded her to follow him. Whateley looked at her and she disappeared.

"Proceed, Mr. Howerson."

It was natural that he should speak of the murder and of those wretched newspaper yarns. He began with the murder, and the old man tapped on his desk. "Yes, a very sad affair."

"And those interviews: Mr. Whateley, I assure you, sir, that I didn't say a word about being a poet, and for no inducement would I have taken the credit of — "

Tap, tap, on the desk. "Yes, I understand, Mr. Howerson," and with a harder rap and a wave of the hand he dismissed the murder and the interviews and looked an inquiry as to what might be the question of real interest. Howerson hesitated.

"You wished to see me — in a moment, Miss Gwin, I shall want you — about some matter in particular? "

Now it meant go forward or back out. He plunged: "Mr. Whateley, I want to lend a man ten thousand dollars."

"Ah! What collateral? "

"The collateral of friendship," he answered. Whateley winked his shrewd old eyes and coughed.

"Friendship? "

"Yes, sir. This man made it possible for me to succeed at Glenwich. He — "

"Oh, a service. That's a different thing. It is well, Mr. Howerson, to reward your friends. I admire that trait in your character. Yes, sir," and now he struck the desk with his fist, "reward your friends and punish your enemies. It is all very well to talk about forgiving your enemies; it sounds well in hymns, but for the most

part, whenever you really forgive an enemy you make a mistake. He possesses the same unchangeable nature, and believes that your forgiveness is due more to his deserving than to your generosity. You shall have the money, Mr. Howerson."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SCRAP OF PAPER

To make a generous promise and courageously to keep it, put the Poet into pleasant humor with himself. It is so easy for a man to say that he has done his best to keep his word. It is so natural to overdraw our account of courage! Down to the street Howerson went, elated; but not for long, for dread of violent death soon fell chill upon his heart, and at the same time jealousy like a hungry rat was nesting in his vitals.

Again occurred the notion that he must better fortify his "hillside cave," and he bought a pistol, another "Bulldog" declared the lettering stamped in steel. Concerning the murder he had read nothing save the interviews and his own poem. Now he gathered another set of newspapers, returned to his "cave" and sat down to wonder over the keen observation of those swift chroniclers of life and death.

"The work must have been done by a skillful and obedient hand, with the sharpest of instruments, doubtless a sword ground to a razor edge, the blow evidently struck from behind while the victim was sitting, the murderer standing, as the cut ran deeper in front, between the eyes." One reporter found the slight but sharp heel marks of a woman's shoes in the sward, close to one of the windows, and a strong magnifying glass brought out the fact that there were finger marks on the window ledge. It was hardly probable that the owner of the sharp heels could have got in at a window fastened

on the inside, to say nothing of inflicting a cut that a surgeon might admire. But there were the marks for what they were worth, several inches of speculative print at least; and there on the floor was a bit of brownish paper, not more than half an inch square, with a black spot on one edge, appearing to have been torn, leaving not enough of the black spot to give a clue as to its purpose. But why, at the scene of a murder, should a spot be black instead of red? This was a question that wisdom did not try to answer, except so far as it might be the sign of some secret brotherhood, proclaiming that the murder was an act of organized vengeance.

All the reports agreed that it was one of the most mysterious murders known to the "history of eccentric crime." More than this, it was international in character, Col. Banstree being known in all the lands of civilization. No arrests had been made, all as yet resting with the coroner.

Then it flashed back to Howerson that he and Joyce had been summoned to give evidence at the inquest, to be held at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Promptly at one o'clock there came a rap and Howerson opened the door with his left hand, his right ready to unchain the "Bulldog." But it was Joyce, as the Poet expected, and in he came with a face as long as a dachshund.

"Why, confound it, Sam, what's wrong?"

"You couldn't get the money."

"How do you know I couldn't?"

"Because I heard two chaps talking at a lunch counter, one of them evidently from Whateley's office; and I heard him say that he had never seen the old man in worse humor, and that according to a stenographer's story he had turned on Mr. Howerson and said, 'I'll let

you have no money, sir, on the collateral of friendship.' And of course he wouldn't give it to you."

Howerson laughed. "Sit down, Sam. I happen to have the check here, made out by the old man himself."

Possibly there will come a time when Joyce may be happier than he was at that moment. He sank back into a chair, after trying in vain to master the quaver in his voice.

"Let me get myself together, as it were," he ventured at last. "I tell you, my dear friend, that the fear of not getting this piece of paper made a shameful coward of me. But it caught me where I am weak, my love for Laura and the kids."

"Caught you where you are strong, you mean."

"No, weak I tell you. When I went home I didn't have the courage to say a word about the loan. It didn't seem possible that I could make my wife understand how I could borrow that much money. It's a miracle!"

Howerson was walking up and down the room, halting at brief moments to look with kindly countenance upon his friend, and then from the window to gaze out into the smoke belched by tugboats on the river. "Everything is a miracle, Sam," he said, coming away from the window, and seating himself on a corner of the table. He had stolen an attitude, and kept it until he found that the pistol in his pocket was hurting him. Then he shifted, drew forth the "dog" and thumped him down upon the table.

"That thing is, surely," said Sam.

"Is what?"

"A miracle. You say everything is."

"Yes, everything: the sunrise, the spark of fire, the ocean, the drop of dew, the elephant, the cricket, the

penny, the ten thousand. But let us have done with it. There can be no true companionship where one feels under debt to the other. Do me a favor. Forget it. By the way, do they search a fellow when he goes before the coroner? We've got to go to that inquest, you know."

"Search him? Why?"

"Because I was thinking of permitting the bull pup to bear me secret company."

"I wouldn't take it with me. What possible need could you have for it?"

"None, of course. Well, we'd better be sauntering on toward the office of old Death and his secretary, the coroner."

At the inquest nothing was brought out that had not been set forth by the reporters. The field for observation was small, for speculation, large; but the fitness of a coroner is not supposed to lie in the endowment of imaginative qualities.

In the gloom of an ill-lighted street corner Howerson bade his friend good night and sought the gloomier precincts of his own — "home" he mused and smiled grimly at so fantastic a twist of the sacred word. He lighted all the jets of the chandelier, but into corners and out again black shadows scurried like noiseless mice. The evening newspapers heaped mystery upon mystery. They all gave Howerson's testimony, and one of them presented to the public a pencil sketch of him, gracing him with the bearing and the countenance of a pugilist stricken with grief; and merciless gods. here was another one of his poems, "Juno's Eyes."

"Blast the eyes of the grave-robber that dug it up," the Poet groaned.

Suddenly he broke off his musing and got out of his

chair to listen. Surely he had heard tiptoeing feet halt at his door. He took the pistol out of the table drawer, shuddered with the cold touch of it, and stood waiting. No sound; yes, the tiptoeing again. Slowly he opened the door and peered out. A newspaper rising and falling in the draft, was borne along the hall; and he laughed like the boy who finds that it was not a ghost but a tablecloth on a clothesline.

Again he sat down to read, "Bulldog" at his elbow, but his thoughts kept harking back to the newspapers, his resurrected verses. How those inartistic trills reproached him. His "Juno's Eyes," indeed! And thus he bewailed. "Now what the deuce do I know about the lamps of that exalted myth? Better to write advertising sonnets to 'Jane's Hat.' Better to write about the little things of earth, specks that escape the notice of the great. After Homer, Dante and Milton — the gods, heaven and hell have been pretty well covered. Juno's sick cat! But I can stare truth out of countenance and hope to burn if I wrote it."

When he went to bed he put "Bulldog" beneath his pillow, and dozing off was growled awake. Since the first day when he entered Whateley's office he had shuddered at the sight of a pistol, and now he harbored one in the only place he could call his home. It was too chill a reminder of the dark night of his soul; he could not sleep with it in the room. He took it into the other room and put it into the table drawer, but this brought no relief. He dozed again, to reawaken with a start; to his morbid senses and straining eyes the pistol was still before him. Like Macbeth's dagger, it made mock of his senses. He wondered if from the window he could throw it over the projecting corner of a warehouse into

the river. He would try; and he threw it as far as he could, and heard no splash, but he heard a tug's hoarse whistle and felt the damp breath of the river. Now that the second "Bulldog" had joined its mate, he felt that he could sleep.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WANTED HIS POEMS

The following few days brought with them no development to simplify the "International murder." In the newspapers there were many pictures and columns of shrewd writing, painting darker the mystery; but interest began to lag. This old fellow was not a millionaire.

At the office Howerson received a note from Rose. "I thank you for thinking to bring to me the distressful news. But really I am not sorry I was absent. Let our friends bring nothing but good news. Our enemies will see to it that we get the bad. But I know that in your excitement you didn't think about it in this way, and I am grateful that you thought of me."

Why did that one word "friends" seem to stand out in such boldness? Yes, it was plain enough that he must regard himself as only a friend. . . . And no wish that soon she might see him! Herein lay cause enough for brooding as he sat in the office when loneliness and dread drove him forth from the silence and the throb of his own abode. Often he would study the play of feeling, of anger, of ripening revenge in Whateley's countenance, wondering sometimes if this man could ever again boy his heart and play beside blazing wood in the Cabin. But not always was he silent and grim; sometimes for brief periods he would light a cigar, lean back in his chair in a cloud of smoke and talk about business and the political phases of the day.

" Ah, our new Canadian company is complete, Mr. Howerson. Each man who has visited the Falls has come back filled with wonder that the site escaped gobbling up so long. Soon we'll begin active and productive operations — worth a great deal of money, I don't need to assure you. Twenty thousand dollars worth of stock, or shares, as our Canadian friends term it, has been made over to you. You said that in this matter you were determined to make Calvin your — ha — beneficiary, but I command, sir, that this shall not be done. Not a word of protest. I will not entertain it."

And Howerson sat there musing, " Why the devil doesn't he invite me to dinner? "

" There is something that I wish you to do while you are not otherwise actively engaged," Whateley continued. " Not long ago one of our street cars killed an old man named Marsh, stepfather to Miss Gwin in there," he nodded, indicating the adjoining room. " The court passed upon the affair, but I want you — no hurry, mind you — to investigate it quietly. The judge who tried the case is a political scoundrel. He hates me, and — ha — and as soon as possible I'll give him cause to increase the volume of his bitterness. When he comes up for reelection he'll find a lively compaign."

" I shall go about it at once, Mr. Whateley."

" No hurry; do it very quietly."

" Er — how is little Calvin, Mr. Whateley? "

" Ha, you ought to have heard him at dinner last night."

The Poet mused, " I wish I had."

" Kept us in a roar. Why, he's the best during-dinner talker I ever saw. He declared that his father was going to find out who murdered old — er — old What's-his-name, and, sir, he proved it to me. I know very well

that if there is a man in this town who can't unravel that — ha — sock of mystery, it is my son Dan. But when little Calvin said he could I agreed, and, sir, do you know, the shrewd little rascal turned on me and wanted to know why I thought so? He did; and my daughter laughed at me."

"I should have liked that little comedy."

"No doubt, Mr. Howerson, no doubt. And I must confess that I was somewhat stumped."

"I might have helped you out by saying that you knew it because Calvin said so."

"Ah, very true, perfectly true. I wish you had been there."

The Poet's heart beat, "the deuce you do!" The old man leaned forward to his work, spreading out upon his pad figures now green but which the future would ripen.

That afternoon there came to Howerson something that mocked his present and fool-capped his past. A magazine, having seen his poems printed in the newspapers, wrote to ask whether he would not contribute to its pages; and a representative of a monthly exploitation of household economies, a frilled thing that bore no more kinship to letters than a shimmering nightdress bears to the garb of an Arctic explorer, called to solicit from him a soft and gentle story. The representative was answered by the old man, before the Poet could speak. "Mr. Howerson is a business man, sir, a thousand degrees removed from your paper."

"Magazine," the representative corrected him, bowing, and with a smile as mildly reproving as the pale illumination of a maiden lady rather than of a man six feet high.

"Same thing," said Whateley, "not worth a moment of a busy man's time. . . . How is it, sir, that you

expect to put woman on the same intellectual plane with man, and continue to print special things for her as if she were a child? We wish you good day, sir."

Howerson realized that this was unjust, and was bold enough to bear the visitor company as far as the elevator.

When the elevator had come up, out stepped Sam Joyce. He had come to foreclose a mortgage on Howerson's evening; and grappled upon, the poet was hauled a long distance, in the jostling home-hurry of dusk, out from the alternating blaze and darkness of electric signs, through a park where lights twinkled like stars hanging low; up two flights of stairs; and now he was in Sam's home, shaking hands with a slight woman whose good humor shone through her household fluster. Here came forward a boy, not a spiritual master like little Calvin, but a master of ruggedness, with a fist as hard as a nut. Hanging back was his sister, younger, just old enough to catch the tail-ends of her brother's boisterous observations and lispingly to repeat them. The boy sat on Howerson's knee, looked up into his eyes and said:

"Boy tries to run over me I fight."

"Fight," the girl lisped, peeping around the corner of a sofa.

"Must I?" the boy inquired.

"Yes," Howerson answered.

"Ho, I'd like to go to your Sunday school," the youngster cried out.

"Day school," lisped his sister.

"Mamma, Mr. Howerson's got brown eyes, ain't he?" the boy shouted in sudden and sensational discovery.

"Why, I don't know, Robert."

"Bet you do," came another shout.

She laughed becomingly, but Sam roared his way out

to the telephone, whither he had just been called. The boy jumped down and ran out with him. The little girl came out from her peeping-place and found safe refuge on her mother's lap. The woman glanced toward the door leading to an adjoining room where Sam was talking over the wire. "You don't know how patient he is with me when I'm worried with the children," she said. "I know I'm fretful at times. There are so many things to worry women, more than men have any idea of, I sometimes think. Women that have no children to muss things up, come with their fine clothes and — put it over me, Sam says. He gets a good salary, but somehow I can't feel free to buy much of anything for myself. One of my friends charged me with being old-fashioned, and I said, 'Yes, I am in love with my husband.' Sam is nearly always so full of hope, and when I'm tired he always makes it a point to be rested. Then that rests me."

"I trust," said Howerson, "that some day I may marry such a woman as Sam's wife."

She laughed, like the ringing of a silver bell, and then came a tinkle, the little girl, in echo.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Howerson." She blushed, the softened color of a rose when evening has subdued the glare of day. "Thank you. Tell Sam that. It will please him. He says I make his atmosphere. God bless him, he makes mine."

"He helped make mine at Glenwich."

"We can never thank you enough, dear friend. You have given us the chance to be somebody. I can hardly realize that Sam is a member of the firm. It is a great victory. The people in the flat just across from us are horribly stuck up, the woman especially. Her husband

cans peas; and she told my children they mustn't play up and down the hall. The idea! But it is a big firm her husband is in with and I didn't say anything. But now I'll say something, and I won't get out of the way when she sweeps in front of her door. She doesn't sweep inside at all, her *maid* does that; but she makes it a point to grab up a broom and run out to sweep just as I come along the hall, to show her *maid* — how I hate that word — that she would sweep me down the stairs if I didn't get out of the way."

Sam came back and she said to him: "We've been talking about you. Sit down, please, and entertain our dearest friend while I see about dinner. Sam wouldn't tell me what you like to eat, Mr. Howerson, so I had to guess at it."

"You bet she knows what's good to eat, George. I tell her there's no restaurant on the face of the earth that can serve such meals as she does, and she thinks I'm guying her."

"My papa saw a man with his head split open," the boy shouted, and his mother turned about from her journey toward the dining room:

"Robert, if you make another remark like that I'll strip you and put you to bed, and you know I'll do it."

When she had gone out, the boy said, "I know you won't!" Had Howerson been called on to speculate as to which of them had spoken the truth he would not have needed a suggestion from Sam.

No one in the Poet's state of mind could have spent a happy evening, but Howerson's friends thought that he enjoyed himself. So he would have, here in this soft retreat, but for the nesting rat in his heart. When he bade them good night, lingering in the hall for one

more glimpse into a household that he had made so happy, he went forth, walking slowly and in heavy meditation through the park, toward the car line.

To reach his home he had to pass the Criminal Court building; and there in the entrance way stood Dan Whateley talking to someone obscured in shadow. Whateley did not see Howerson, and for a time the Poet loitered along as if he half expected Dan to rush forth, seize him by the hand and say, "Oh, come home with me." But Dan did not rush, and the Poet moped on to his desolate "cave," wherein he sat down to a midnight snack of morbid fancies.

But what was Dan Whateley doing there at that hour of the night?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"NIGGER HERE TOO!"

With Dan Whateley it had been a busy evening and a night not free from activity. About four o'clock in the afternoon he was sitting in his office when a bailiff entered and announced that a young mulatto woman wanted to see him on most important business. She was admitted, and when she came in she looked around, at a clerk writing and at the bailiff, standing just within the door.

"I want to talk to you by yourself," she said to Whateley, coming up close to him.

Dan looked at her. "What is it you wish to say?"

"I don't want to say it to anybody but you. Tell 'em to go out." Then, leaning toward him she whispered: "I saw old Banstree murdered."

Dan wheeled about and motioned to the two men to get out, and when the room was cleared he said, "Sit down there."

She obeyed, making a motion as if to put back her kinkish hair.

"What's your name?"

"Mrs. Chi Moy. My husband is a Chinaman, and I come to you instead of going to the police because I feel that I am better acquainted with you. I am your wife's special laundress."

"And you say you saw the murder."

"Yes I did. My husband Chi Moy killed him."

"Go ahead."

"I saw him, I did. I married him and I was a good wife to him, but now I hope they'll hang him; he's done neglected me for another woman and me a good wife to him. When I done called him for it he called me *nigger* and — "

"But tell me what you saw. Quick."

"I can't tell you any quicker'n I can talk, can I? Called me 'nigger' and I said 'I'm going to watch you, I am,' and I followed him to the laundry where he works, and then I followed him when he took old Col. Banstree's washing home. I thought his woman lived in there, for it was the only place where he delivered any; and I went over into the lot and peeped in along the windows, and at last I come to the room where he was and saw the old man come in and sit down, and Moy moved around counting out the shirts and collars, and he put them into a drawer, and got behind the old man, and then I saw him take a sword out of his clothesbasket; and all this time I was standing out by the window, with my hands on the sill; and that scrap of paper with a black mark on it that they made such a fuss over was only a piece of a wash list; and since then I found out the woman wasn't in that building but across the street and — "

"Go on with your story. Hurry up."

"Goodness alive, ain't I hurryin' as fast as I can? And I want you to arrest Moy and that woman, too, for if you don't do something to her I will."

"You say he took the sword out of the basket. Then he must have brought it with him."

"Yes, a funny old sword that used to belong to his father, as sharp as a razor."

"Where is Chi Moy now?"

"Over at the laundry where he works. Here is the number," and she gave him a piece of paper. He looked

at it for a moment and then arose. " You stay right here," he said, and went out and was gone nearly half an hour. When he returned he said to her: " A warrant has gone to bring Chi Moy." She arose. " Sit down," he commanded.

" But what for you want with me here any more? I don't want to stay here, 'less you bring that woman. Will you bring her? "

" We have nothing to do with her. Sit down, I tell you."

" I've done what I come to do and I'm not going to stay. I haven't done no crime and you can't hold me."

" Sit down or you go to jail."

She sat down. " That's a funny way to do business. What you going to do with me? Do me this way and I'll take back all I said."

They waited a long time, the woman restless and talkative, the lawyer silent, listening, going sometimes to the door, looking out into the corridor. The woman became indifferent, hummed an old time tune reminiscent of Kentucky. Night fell, the lights were turned on and still they waited.

" Maybe he's in some opium joint and they are hunting for him," she said. " Well, I don't care. What I said is true, anyhow. Look here, it's gettin' late and I'm hungry."

He ordered supper for her, and with great relish she ate it, and then was seized with remorse. " I did love that man even if he is a Chinaman. Mr. Whateley, I want to go home and let all this thing drop. I'm sorry I come. Oh, I wish I hadn't. And if they hang him — they're coming? "

She sprang up from the chair. Dan motioned her back from the door, stood waiting, and then sat down.

The alarm was a late jury tramping toward the court room. The woman began to whimper. "It ain't true, Mr. Whateley. Every word of it is a lie; and I'd tell you that with my last breath. I'll get up in court and swear it ain't true. The law won't believe what a jealous woman says nohow. You let me go home. Man, I've got my work to do. You're interferin' with me right now."

Footsteps, and this time not a false alarm. In came two plain-clothes men bringing with them Chi Moy. The woman threw herself upon him; they pulled her away. She caught back at him and seized his sleeve. He looked at her and laughed. "Nigger here, too!" For a second she stood glowering upon him, anger in bronze she looked; then she collapsed upon the floor, the rubbish of remorse. They gathered her up, placed her on a chair, fanned her with a newspaper. Moy grinned at her, yellow venom in his eyes. She came to, and shrieking that it was all a lie, demanded his release. Laughing at her he said, "Liar. I killed him. He-he."

She dropped upon her knees and wept with her head and arms on the chair, and Moy, after smiling down upon her as if in great amusement, turned to the astonished men. "I more American man as you, you, you! You born *on* 'Merican soil, I in Frisco, down deep. Come up *out* of 'Merican soil. See?"

They told him to wait, that they wished to take his confession, and he sat down and waited while a messenger scurried forth to find some belated stenographer. They found one and he came in swiftly, the leaves of his pad fluttering.

"Now you will please go ahead?" said Whateley. "Repeat how and where you were born."

He did so. The woman looked up at him, red-eyed, and then her head sank again on her arms.

" I go to school in Frisco, learn much but not to sing school song. Damn foolishness; but I read and write and make many figures. Long time I come here, bime-by in restaurant where I work. Long time marry this woman. Bad business, hell life. But I laugh, he-he! Hope she die. She won't."

She looked up at him. " Oh, Moy, Moy, don't talk that way."

" You hush," he commanded. She sobbed and her head sank again. He withdrew his eyes from her, dismissed her with a shrug, his head lying over toward one shoulder like a man hanging. The stenographer's pencil waited. Whateley gestured. Chi Moy began again: " To the restaurant come old man, come much and I wait on him long time, no trouble, but sometime he get mad, sometime cuss me. I laugh, he-he! One night very bad, nothing suit, cuss. Order more tea. I bring it, pour out cup. He taste and throw cup in my face. Down go cup and break on floor, and 'prietor Yang Gee run up. Old sword man lie, say I insult him with cold tea. Heap good customer and I beg pardon. Yang Gee frown at me and tell me look sharp or I discharge. People all laugh. Good joke. I laugh too. Old man call me yellow dog. Yes, and I growl as I go home. The hell comes up in me. I can't sleep. Me born under 'Merican soil. I think long time till day. Then I go back to Yang Gee and tell him I work no more for him. He say ' get out.' I go. I have plan. I find out where old man has wash. I go there — work cheap. Carry his wash home. All good now. I say to my father — "

" Is your father living? " Whateley inquired.

" No. But I say to my father, ' I 'venge the insult

of your son and then I come to you.' I have his sword, thousand year old, keen more than shave with. My father, his father — all jugglers. He throw up cherry and the sword cut it in two, seed, all. I carry home his wash. I don't say washee. I carry it home, two, five times. He don't know me. All Chinaman alike to him. All this time I in love — "

The woman looked up.

" With my 'venge. I call it sweetheart. I wake up talking to it."

" Look out," cried an officer.

The woman had fallen over on the floor. Moy did not look at her. They raised her, fanned her, sprinkled her face. They put bundled coats beneath her head and let her lie there. Someone spoke of a doctor, and with a moan she shook her head.

" Proceed, Moy," Whateley commanded.

" Wake up talking. Then I get clothes and put sword in basket. The sun shines; I laugh. I go. Nobody in hall. Push open door. Nobody in room. Bime-by he come. He growl at me. I laugh. I put shirts in drawer. He sit down. Think. I think too. All the shirts in drawer, drawer shut. I stand behind him. Sword shine in basket. Swords on wall dull, not bright. I look on his head; it shine too, blue vein on top. Hi, I cut cherries too; I practice much. I measure. Little red bump in center of head. H-a-h! I split it. Out come sword. Quick, go in basket, so quick no blood. Old man bleed slow. He shudder, then still. I go out. Nobody in hall. I laugh."

His eyelids were growing heavy. With dreamy hate he looked upon the woman. " Nigger! " he said.

She scrambled to her feet. " Let me go! " she cried. Whateley opened the door and she ran out of the room.

They led Moy away, down to the jail. Whateley went with the prisoner, his own yellow leap into public notice the fulfillment of little Calvin's prediction. When the Chinaman had been locked up, Dan remembered that he had left an important paper lying on the table in his office. He returned to get it, and just as he reached the entrance from the street, a man halted and began to question him, about nothing of consequence, it seemed, but Dan in good humor with the world, his eye moist with gazing at his own rising star, halted for a moment to talk to him. Another man was approaching, Howerson, walking slowly. He passed, and the questioner stepped out from the shadow and followed him. When Howerson loitered, the figure, seeking the shadows, moved with more caution. It was Hudsic.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A STRAGGLING VISIT

The first sleepy blinker at the morning's news saw Dan Whateley's name. The Chinaman's confession, good breakfast food; but who had done it up into packages, shipped it? "Surely," said the honest voter, ever looking for reform and ever voting as he was told, "surely such ability ought to be rewarded with the states attorney's office, and then the governor's chair. Young Whateley is one of the people. Hurrah for him!"

Old Whateley chuckled and at breakfast he said to Rose, "Yes, your brother is now a great man. Little Calvin —"

"But give Dan his due, father. He has more ability than you credit him with."

"Ability, yes, I acknowledge it. Didn't the woman go to him? Didn't the Chinaman confess to him? I assure you I'm delighted."

"But you would rather he had —"

"Put through one of Howerson's schemes? Yes, I confess it. Yes, it would mean more, and sometimes when Howerson is in the office I feel myself almost angry with him on my son's account."

"That isn't just to Mr. Howerson."

"I know it; and hardly anything is just to anybody when our dearer interests are concerned. Of course I am glad Dan is to come up, and really that is what this thing means," and he nodded down at the newspaper. "Success in life turns on a mighty little pivot, I tell

you." Then, after reflection: "Through life there runs a crooked hair-line: on one side, achievement; on the other, failure."

"That sounds like Mr. Howerson," she laughed.

"Yes, that's a fact," he admitted. "I am not inclined to imitate, but once in a while I catch myself putting things in his manner. To me he is a peculiar sort of a book, and occasionally some of his lines come up in my mind. I never met a man before who affected me in that way. And I have seen all along that he is not trying to stamp himself upon me. He never talks about himself. He doesn't seem to care for money; his pleasure comes from achievement, and that's all that really counts for anything. Civilization is always busy with the solving — ha — of problems, but no solution amounts to anything unless it builds up something else to be solved. I believe that Howerson will make his mark. His earlier experiments with himself have left kinks in his character which time, I believe, will straighten out."

"Kinks?" she repeated, looking up at him.

"Yes, his dabbling in little puddles, his trying to write poetry, let me say."

Smiling, she took a sort of half musing issue with him. "But didn't his dabbling teach him to swim in a heavier sea? I think I heard you say that what he has done was due to his imagination."

"Ha, yes; but not to ditties. Not to the maids that danced in the stable loft." He looked at his watch. "But I must trot along. When Fame knocks at Dan's door and routs him out of bed, give him my congratulations. Ha, ha." Joining in his merriment she laughed with him to the front door, kissed him, beseeching him not to work too hard.

To the Poet the night had not been kind. Again he

heard tiptoeing in front of his door. He had listened a long, heart-beating time, and when at last he opened the door to peer out, he saw nothing, saw no explaining paper blown down the hall. The air was warm and he had raised his window, but the wind moaned among the hulks on the river, rising at times to the keenness of a woman's cry, a Zondish cry, and he closed it; but now at the casement the wind labored, talking in hollow tones, like Hudsic. With bits of paper he plugged the sash to keep it from rattling, and went to bed; and when after many a breath-holding listen he dozed, he dreamed that he saw himself lying there, and yet another self sitting there, ready on the first alarm to seize the sleeping self and to shake him awake. The morning came with a mottle of clouds and a wind blowing thunder out of the warming west.

Now, in the quieting daylight, having sneaked his breakfast at a restaurant so famished of customers as to threaten the proprietor with disaster, Howerson was sitting in his room staring at the scare-headed account of the latest turn of the Banstree case. Ah, that was what Dan Whateley had been doing so late at night, hanging about the tenement of justice, talking to someone obscured in shadow.

He read the confession, the "skill" with which it had been obtained — and then the paper grew black before him and the blood sang in his ears — lines standing out from the rest, halfway down the page: *There can be no doubt that Moy did the killing; but his confession is too simple, say some. "I am an agent of justice," Moy declares repeatedly; and the police think he is merely the tool of some sinister organization.*

"Agent of justice!" There was a pencil sketch of the prisoner, a villainous caricature, but crude as the

drawing was, it carried likeness to Howerson's eye. Chi Moy — and with a shudder there leaped into Howerson's mind a picture of Hudsic, his hand upon a Chinaman's shoulder.

Howerson was keyed to high tension that broke in a wild leap as the telephone bell rang. It was only the old man, calling him to the office.

Whateley greeted him cordially. "Ah, good morning, Mr. Howerson. Sit down. Ha, and so little Calvin was right. His father has indeed not only found out the murderer, but is getting at a nest of black-handers or anarchists. Fame comes in devious ways — to the Moys and Dans of this world. However, we're not much concerned with them this morning. Mr. Howerson, I have a very important commission for you. I want you to negotiate the right-of-way for a traction line from Rockdale, Missouri, thirty-five miles across the country, tapping a line projected from Des Moines, Iowa. I need not emphasize the fact that you will have to go about it very adroitly. You will no doubt find the farmers suspicious and difficult to deal with. Employ a local lawyer, selecting him not for what you conceive to be his ability, but as much as possible because of his resemblance to a farmer."

"Some retired Populist judge defeated for re-election because he was too honest for politics," Howerson suggested at a venture.

"You catch the idea precisely, Mr. Howerson," and upon his diplomatist he cast a quick look of esteem, but in it there was no invitation to dinner. "Exactly. I have here a plan drawn up, which you will follow as nearly as you can, depending at all times on your own judgment. As I say, the work will take time and patience. You will leave for Rockdale — "

"To-night," said Howerson. "The morning train, I should think, is gone."

"Leave to-morrow morning. I want you to take the day train and stop for an hour or so at a station called Hoopgood, look into a coal-mining property there and report on it."

"I shall do so, sir. Rockdale; that's where my friend Watkins is manager of your interests."

"Yes, and he is proving himself an invaluable man. I haven't had even a suggestion of trouble since he took charge. Moreover, the output of the mines has been greatly increased."

"I am glad to hear it, I assure you."

"Ha, naturally. You will of course demonstrate to the farmers that this road will be a blessing to them. It is sometimes easier to effect a treaty with the most barbaric of nations than to put through a simple deal with the most civilized of farmers. The trouble with the American farmer is that he thinks he's a statesman."

"I think the trouble is," said Howerson, "that he knows he's sharp."

"Eh? Perhaps so. It may be advisable in some instances to sell a share or two of stock to some of the more influential of them and — ahem — they can be dealt with afterwards by me. Oh, in a perfectly honorable manner, you understand." Howerson had looked at him searchingly. "In nearly every neighborhood you can enlist the active interest of the preacher, with assurance of annual passes for himself and family. Our road will help him to spread the Gospel, or himself, which to him is the same thing. If you strike a place where they are building a church, contribute to the fund. . . . I believe that's about all. Here are your more serious but not more important instructions."

He handed over a big envelope and shut Howerson out of his mind.

During the day the Poet employed himself with looking into the death of old Marsh, to whose widow the court had awarded five thousand dollars, and found that the verdict, though rendered by Whateley's enemy, was a just decision. Late in the afternoon he went over to the hat house to call on his friend, new member of the firm, and found him sitting in the office, dictating to a thin maiden, joyous in his fresh importance. Sam rushed out to bring in the two other members, Mr. Clung, easily a millionaire, and showing he felt the importance of that fact by the throat-clearing introduction of his partner, Judge Brose, who, years ago, stepped down from his pine bench as justice of the peace to dispose of blankets and whiskey to the Indians at the mouth of the St. Joe River. But he had atoned for all that, having sent hymn books to Booker Washington's school, and having attached his name with broad swipe of gold pen to a prohibition petition. Harvester of more experience, he was the talkative member, and he assured Howerson that he was very glad to meet him, *very.* "I read your poem written for the paper the other day, and my wife thought it was very good indeed. I don't write poetry myself, but my wife does. I married a schoolteacher the last time, sir, and that may account for it."

Howerson seized upon the chance to whisper to Joyce, "Let's get out of here."

They went out, but Howerson, perceiving that his friend was anxious over the letters he had to get off, halted and said: "Go on back, Sam. I know you are busy."

"Oh, no, George, not at all. The letters can wait."

"How many have you got to dictate?"

"Oh, fifty, perhaps. But — "

"But you'll go back and get at it, and if you're through before all the sparks go out, come over to the 'cave.' I leave to-morrow morning to be gone I don't know how long."

"All right. If it's not too late I'll come over. I'll see you at the station anyhow. Where are you going and what time does your train leave?"

Howerson told him, turned him about toward his purchased opportunity to overwork himself, and bade him "beat it back to the cage." Then the Poet, his heart hungry, sought the neighborhood of Whateley's house, passed once in front of the gate, wandering about in the dusk and the storm-blowing wind from the west.

He went to his "cave," to wait for Joyce, and he sat bookless and brooding, but not in silence, for the jolting thunder-cart drove over the town and the driver whipped up his horse with lashes of rain. It was a night to fit into Howerson's mood. At each crack of the whip from the driver of the thunder-cart he started; at each creak of the floor, of a rusty hinge, of a loose casement, he cringed. The Agents of Justice were cowards, he had said; but Moy gave him the lie. Colonel Banstree had played them false; he was dead.

A knock at the door, and with hand on the knob Howerson called out, "Who is it?"

"Sam Joyce," the answer came, and laughing his heavy dreariness to flight he flung the door open. "Come in."

In came Hudsic, and shoving close upon him, Sengle and Batterson. Howerson fell back, swept for a moment into dismay. But it was not a time for fright, for weakness; and looking upon Hudsic, standing there in a sort of satanic grace and coolness, he said:

" Sit down."

Hudsic bowed, smiling, and turning toward his friends motioned them to seats on an improvised davenport along the wall near the door. He took a chair, placing his hat, red handkerchief in it, beside him on the floor. " Will not our dear brother please to be seated? " he said. Howerson sat down, leaning back against the table. He waited, puffy Batterson breathing hard.

Hudsic began slowly to speak: " Ah, so forgetful is sudden prosperity of its old and less fortunate friends that you neglected to — ahem — apprise us of your new place of abode."

" Yes, you — " Sengle began, but Hudsic gestured him to silence and continued.

" But brothers left in the struggle are persistent of friendship, and thus it was that we — I found you, followed you home last night from the Criminal Court Building, but was — er — too modest to intrude upon you at that late hour, supposing that you might be at your newly-acquired devotions. And you will now please pardon our little device, the method we had of obtaining ingress. We have seen your name coupled with that of Mr. Sam Joyce, and presumed that a visit from him, if not directly expected, might not be unwelcome. Sorry to have disappointed you."

Howerson leaned back against the table. " I trust that smoking is not offensive to you," he said.

" Oh, not at all."

Howerson lighted his pipe. Great Julius said that men fear most the evils that are furthest from them; and now, looking into the countenance of his long dread, it did not seem so fearful. He waited. Hudsic went to the door, looked out, came back slowly and resumed his seat, leaving the door slightly ajar.

"We heard that you were abroad and were much aggrieved." Out of his hat he took his handkerchief, wiped his face and dropped the red rag back into its place. "Ahem — and were much pleased to see your name in the newspapers. But surely you have written better poems."

"To the point, Professor."

"Point indeed. Our worthy brother Chi Moy came to the point, eh? Ah!" he cackled, noting Howerson's start as confirmation of his fears shot home. "You saw between the lines of the Chinaman's confession. From him the hounds of the law will catch no scent. Banstree defied us long; he was bold. But Moy was true to his oath — a heathen. I suppose you remember having called him a heathen, Mr. Howerson, the night when you dedicated your life to a holy work."

"I remember the brute."

"No doubt." Hudsic paused to listen. "Not luxurious but rather pleasant quarters you have here, Mr. Howerson."

"Beats the cellar I once found him in," spoke up Sengle.

"Or the garret where he swallowed poison," said Batterson.

Howerson smoked. "Well, what is it you have come to demand? Money?

"My dear Mr. Howerson," said Hudsic, "we are not tax collectors."

"Then what do you ask of me?"

"Ask? We ask nothing, Mr. Howerson. We demand that which is our own, by oath."

"Oh, I see. Then you want — "

"Please do not say *want,* Mr. Howerson. Say rather

that we are ready to receive our just due, your life, Mr. Howerson."

"Ah, anything else?"

Sengle sprang up. "Let me shoot him, Professor."

"Sit down. We are not here to be brutal. Do not forget that in the presence of so perfect a gentleman as our host, you too must be gentle."

"Are we to play a farce?" Howerson inquired.

"That depends upon you," Hudsic answered him. "And before we proceed further toward the accomplishment of our mission, let us express our gratitude to you for the — hem — remoteness of the neighborhood, and to nature for thunder that will swallow up lesser noises. However, I do not anticipate any disturbance. Ah, Sengle, you might stand out in the hall to serve as guide to the other Brothers. We have had some little difficulty in getting together, Mr. Howerson, but you must know that the time has been short.

"Er — we could on numerous occasions have shot you down, Mr. Howerson, but that would have left no moral, and an act without moral effect is but wasted energy. We could have — pardon me for a blunt word — killed Whateley, too, but after your lapse, our thought was not of him, but of you, Mr. Howerson. One of our men was near you when, having come from the office of your new master, you shudderingly dropped your pistol into the river; then we knew that you were a man too weak for just vengeance. But there are men who are not too weak."

Thunder rumbled, rain lashed the window, and from a skylight somewhere in the building came the noise of desperate revel, pigmy furies dancing a clog.

"You have no regret to express, Mr. Howerson?"

"For having been aroused from a nightmare? No."

"Do you call a most solemn oath a nightmare?"

"The oath I took in your presence I call an insanity. I violated that insanity by becoming sane. Do I owe you or your so-called brotherhood anything? Didn't I more than return the money? Didn't that square accounts?"

Hudsic smiled. "To square accounts with a poet is to give the fretful child the toy it cries for. But justice sometimes demands that a child shall be punished. . . And you refuse even to explain."

"No, I don't refuse to do that. In desperate faith I took that oath, and entered Whateley's office determined to kill him. But I caught sight of myself in a mirror, a man, a gentleman, if you please, and not a ragged assassin. . . Even then I might have murdered him, still insane though shaken, but in ran a little boy, and I saw the hard capitalist melt into love and pour it forth, the love of a simple old man. Then there seemed to fall upon me a dream, and out of that dream a music never heard before, and there arose the vision of —"

"Let us have done with this rhapsody, Mr. Howerson."

Batterson spoke up: "A very touching story. Print it in a woman's magazine."

With his head thrust in at the door Sengle snarled, "Write it on curl papers."

"Since then, Mr. Howerson," Hudsic proceeded, "you have become prolific of enterprises. You were dazzled and you fell."

"I was dazzled and I arose."

"Yes, you arose and flew away from the most solemn obligation that mortal man could take. In the exuberance of your flight you did not think of that."

"I have thought of everything. You are therefore saved the trouble of reminding me."

"Ah. And you deem your apology sufficient?"

"I deem it at least conclusive."

"So far as it serves the unities of your eccentric drama. I see. But eccentric drama is usually distorted comedy, Mr. Howerson, while the drama of justice may call for tragedy. And you try to deceive us and explain it away with the love of an old man for a boy and perhaps your own love for a woman."

Hudsic laughed, a cold sneer, and Batterson snorted his contempt. Howerson put down his pipe and sat looking at them. Hudsic spoke:

"But there is another woman who has upon you a prior and a more sacred claim, Mr. Howerson. Surely you have not forgotten Annie Zondish."

"I remember her as one remembers — "

"Eyeless justice with her scales," the Professor interrupted.

"A nightmare. With a brass spoon she fed my delirium, poisoning my soul with verdigris."

"Ingratitude, Mr. Howerson. She snatched you from the jaws — ah, she is here!"

Noiseless, and slow, like a cat, Annie Zondish came into the room. She shook the raindrops from her hair and stood gazing. Howerson did not flinch.

"And so we find you," she said.

"Yes. Won't you sit down?"

Her face darkened with contempt. "Oh, I wish I could make you feel how I despise you!"

"Imagine that I feel it and let us get through with this farce."

"Farce! Oh, yes, it would be a comedy to strangle an ape."

Howerson bowed mockingly and then addressed himself to Hudsic: "Well, you haven't as yet proved the object of this straggling visit."

Hudsic looked toward the door, listening. "The proof lags but will come, Mr. Howerson."

"You needn't pronounce my name every time you speak to me."

"Tired of hearing your name," said Annie. "In that sensitiveness we sympathize with you to the extent of promising complete relief."

"Why not speak English?" said Howerson, slowly shaking his head. Annie, with gesture, requested from Hudsic the privilege to reply. The professor smiled his acquiescence.

"Wet straw smokes much before it burns," she said. Then she advanced, stood within touch of him, looked him hard in the eye. "We have come to demand our due. Do you recall your oath? Do you remember that in the event of the betrayal of your trust you were to surrender your life? Is your memory so very short?"

Hudsic spoke. "You gave us a judgment note, Mr. Howerson."

"I shall not pretend longer to misunderstand you," said Howerson. "After his night-school manner Professor Hudsic made it clear before you came, Miss Zondish. But it is silly. Let me remind you that this is America. When I first met you I was abroad, a tramp in the land of dementia. I left you and returned home. Professor, the majority of your brotherhood are Russians, and Miss Zondish, you are from the czar's country, I believe."

"Yes, and it was for such as you that I came to this wilderness of wolves and weakness, where you read the

old Jew book, listen to the divine right of gold and call yourselves educated and moral."

"Now you are getting away from ordinary farce," said Howerson, and then he added: "Professor, in her most speculative dreams Russia could not see the vision of a democracy such as you found here. Offered every advantage, it would take your class in Russia five hundred years to spell out the difference between anarchy and republicanism."

Again Hudsic looked toward the door, listening. Then with a wave of his hand he silenced Annie who had begun to speak, and spoke himself: "We have but little time to spare, but I demand a moment, sir. In Russia we are oppressed by a political power, but here it is a money power which will grow into the most heartless of all oppression. I have but to call your attention to the sweat shops, and to thousands of men, who, driven to despair by the trusts, are forced to murder themselves."

Annie had stepped back. Now she moved forward again, waved Hudsic to silence and spoke: "Such a discussion at such a time! I can hardly conceive of it. Mr. Howerson, we demand your life. In our hearts there might be mercy, but the advancement of our cause cries out for vengeance."

"Mr. Howerson," said Hudsic, "it is a matter of history that in this city a man who had betrayed his brothers was found in a sewer, with his throat cut. The newspapers still shudder over the sad fate of our one time brother, Col. Banstree. *You* found him. Ah, come in, brothers. We had to turn this affair into a social visit in order that you might get here in time."

Henk and Zenicoff, the two other Agents of Justice

present when Zondish administered to Howerson the death oath, now came in, with drunkard bluster. When in Henk's red eye Howerson saw the murder-look, he shuddered, knowing now that though the play began in farce it must have a bloody ending.

"What!" Henk cried; "are you giving him a chance to argue? Foolish! String him up. Ah, there's his gallows," and he pointed to the chandelier. "Up with him or he'll talk you out of it!" From beneath his coat he uncoiled a rope.

Hudsic, arising, waved him to silence. "Brothers, justice should never be boisterous." He bowed to Howerson. "It was Lord Bacon who said that revenge is a sort of wild justice. But our justice must not be wild, for it is not revenge."

"Professor," said Howerson, "I can't help admiring you."

"I thank you, sir. Your compliment reminds me of an incident when I was in Siberia. We had tunneled to escape prison, and just before entering the trench one Imligoff sank to his knees and began to pray, whereupon I was forced to admonish him, 'Into the tunnel, Imligoff; this is no time for flattery.' I could tell you many amusing episodes but you — ha! — could not remember them. As I say, we could have shot you, but that would have been immoral — I mean without moral. But found hanging to the chandelier, with a chair kicked out of the way, and with a note on your table wherein our apt Brother Henk, marvelous penman, has perfectly imitated your hand, telling why you committed suicide — that will be a moral for all men who think to betray a sacred brotherhood."

Henk was making a noose. Zenicoff locked both doors, and took out the keys. Hudsic spoke to Henk: "It may

be necessary to wait for a clap of thunder and to shoot him."

They rushed upon him. Howerson leaped from his chair. In a flash he jerked the old sword from the wall. Before they could bat the eye of astonishment, the ancient blade was whistling in a circle of fire about his head. "Out!" he cried advancing upon the drunken, Henk, who fright-eyed fell back, fumbling with his pistol. "Unlock the door, Zenicoff, or I'll pin you to the wall!" The coward flew to the door, and with the key was chattering at the lock when upon the other door there came a loud knock. Into a corner Hudsic and the rest had retreated, and now in panic they fell apart.

"Who's there!" Howerson cried, and in deep tone the answer came:

"The police!"

Open flew Zenicoff's door, and out into the north and south corridor the brothers rushed, sweeping the sister with them. Howerson laughed, a cry of delight, for his blood was singing. Into a corner he flung the sword, caught up the key that Zenicoff had dropped, unlocked the other door and threw it open: "Come in!" Then came from without the music of a merry laugh; and into the room like the romp of a child, someone leaped, still laughing; and dazzled he stood, gazing upon Rose Whateley.

CHAPTER XL.

THE POWER THAT MOVES THE WORLD

Howerson stood gazing, his lips apart, unable to speak. Rose resplendent in raindrop diamonds, still laughing, halted in her merriment to imitate in deep voice her answer at the door, "The police!" Laughing again, all in a moment, while the Agents of Justice could still be heard scampering down the stairs, "Pal," she said, and held forth her hand.

"In the name of God!"

She raised a protesting finger, and now with no laughter in her countenance, shook her head. He made a motion as if again to seize her hand. "Is it possible — "

"Quite," she broke in, and now she laughed again.

"I don't — don't understand."

"Nor I. But we shall?" Her eyes and her voice questioned him.

"Yes, when it becomes possible. But now I am benumbed. My senses tingle like a foot asleep."

"What were they going to do? Kill you?"

He pointed to the sword. "I was going to kill them." And then as she smiled, his pent-up blood shot through him, and he laughed. "They were going to kill me. You saved my life."

"Please let me think so, for a little while, anyhow."

"For all time. But you must tell me how you happened to come here, alone."

"Oh, that can be made plain enough. But first I must know why they were going to kill you."

He could not find in his heart the courage to tell her. But some sort of explanation must be offered:

"A gang of anarchists seeking to assassinate me because I am employed by your father. But he must not know anything about it," he added quickly. "Be patient with me and when I come back from a journey which I must make to-morrow, it shall all be clear. But now I must beg of you to keep secret all you know — even what you have done to-night. This may seem ungenerous on my part but I implore it of you. Your father is in no danger. If he were I would save him at the expense of my own life."

"A woman would like to know why she is a heroine," she said, and the humor and the sadness mingling in her voice smote his heart.

"Yes, I know, my — my dear — "

"Friend," she suggested.

He bowed. "Yes, I know, but you will wait a short time, won't you? "

"Oh, I am not so *very* curious," she said.

"You are a goddess."

"No, not that inhuman. I am a little more curious, for I must ask a few questions: Will they make any further attempt to assassinate you? "

"No. They will all be out of town by to-morrow."

"Then you will not try to have them arrested."

"No; not even if I knew where I could lay hands on them. But I shall leave them to think they are in danger. At present," he added bending upon her an entreating look, "everything must be kept quiet. I know it is asking a great deal — "

She smiled, sadly, he thought; but he did not adventure himself now to speak further, for in deep emotion he realized the wildness of the storm she had defied, saw

the rain and the wind in her tangled hair; and his knees of a sudden were weak as if he felt himself impelled to kneel to her. But she spoke in the kindly grace of her inherited humor, and laughed his weakness into grateful strength. Then he had the steadiness to remind her that she had not explained how she knew the place of his secret abode or why at this time she had come through the wind and the rain.

"Why, I was returning from down-town in the auto and it broke down. There was no cab handy and as it was raining, I hastened across to another street and got on a car." Now she was serious. "Near me, in a corner sat two mean-looking men. They appeared to have been drinking. Suddenly I became conscious of what they were muttering. I had caught your name. One of them took out a slip of paper and in a smothered tone but loud enough for me to hear, read the number of your office. I gathered, though I couldn't catch their exact words, that they were going to punish you for failing to keep some sort of obligation. When they got off I followed them. I wouldn't call the police because I didn't want any publicity. It was all simple enough. It was a lark and I enjoyed it. And now I must get home. Company is waiting for me."

"For a heroine, yes, it was simple enough," said Howerson. "It was safe enough for a woman with a great shielding soul to — "

"Mr. Howerson, I forbid you. Why, women do thousands of things more heroic every day." She looked at him, smiling in the fullness of her radiant being, and it seemed that the air grew suddenly aglow, paling the lamps overhead, for all other lights are dim when the light of the soul burns high. "Good night."

"Wait, I'll get a taxi. It has begun to rain hard

again, but there's a stand not far from here and I can run over there very quickly."

"Why, you needn't go out in the rain. You can telephone."

"I can't. That wire connects only with the office. Wait here, please." Snatching his hat he rushed out, grateful to the rain for beating upon him, and with hat off he bared his head to it.

Rose walked about the room, looking at the dingy designs on the wall, seeing fantastic pictures where none was intended: a bearded hermit sitting in front of his door, an ancient castle with bowmen on the battlements. Hearing the door creak she looked about, and in came a woman, wearing a red cap. Slowly and for a time without speaking the two women advanced toward each other, one as calm as if she were in her father's house, the other biting back the emotion that surged outward to her lips.

The agitated woman was the first to speak. "Do you know who — who I am?"

With the not ungracious smile of perfect self-possession came the answer. "I don't believe that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Oh, you don't. Quite remarkable, is it not? But let us have done with your society hauteur and get down to common sense. I have seen you before. From a lofty perch many times I have looked down upon you at the opera. You are Rose Whateley. I am Annie Zondish."

"I am pleased to meet you, Miss Zondish."

Zondish flashed her scorn. "From society banter to downright lying."

Old Calvin's hot blood flew to her face, but ebbed back, cooling; and Rose stood, calm, smiling. "Yes, I

am really glad to meet you. I like to meet individuals."

"Specimens, you mean."

"Women who count," came the quick reply.

A defiant look. "I don't believe it. You would rather have met any other woman in America. . . . But may I ask why I find you here in a man's room?"

"In a man's office? Yes. Perhaps I came to —"

"To frighten cowards," Annie Zondish broke in. "But one of them, cowardly and weak only for a moment, has come back strong. . . . I expected to confront the son of perfidy, and not the daughter of a beast."

Old Calvin's eyes shot forth their lightning. "I do not wish to quarrel with you, but I am younger and stronger than you, and I shall not permit you to call my father a beast."

"He is fattened on the blood of innocence."

"You do not know my father. Why do you hate him?"

"Why? I hate his kind. He represents the greed of power that —"

"That you and your kind envy."

"I envy no man."

"Your followers then. You are the high priestess of destruction. Your disciples are the votaries of avarice. Which one of them would you trust with a million dollars?"

"Money means nothing to me."

"Which *one* of your followers would you trust? None! You hate my father for what you think him to be — I love him for what he is. But why should your hatred go out to George Howerson?"

"Because he has betrayed our cause. He —"

" He has found the good in my father. You, too — "

" I do not sell my soul — my principles."

" Nor he. George Howerson is as fine a man as ever breathed."

" So, too, I thought — once."

" You will think so again when you understand."

" I understand everything. He has sold himself for sentiment." There was a sneer in her tone.

" He has redeemed himself with loyalty to truth — to himself. You hate him. He loves you — as his sister who would do him wrong." In Rose's voice there was a tone of so warm and sincere an earnestness that the anarchist started with an emotion which she was not accustomed to feel, and she gazed at old Calvin's daughter, her eyes not now so hard.

Rose, giving her no time to re-heat her anger, continued, in a softened voice: " I would be the last woman in the world to hurt you; I have read several sketches that you wrote, when you turned from violence to gentleness, and there was heart in them."

Annie Zondish looked at her. Rose continued: " And I said to myself, ' I should like to meet that woman. She has a soul.' "

" I — I don't want to believe you. Your class — "

" I have no class, Miss Zondish. Like you, I am an individual, and differently environed, I might have fought society as you are fighting it. So after all, we are but sisters, estranged."

" Impossible. We can never be other than implacable enemies, and I am astonished at myself that I stand here, pretending to reason with you."

" Enemies! Why should you and I not understand each other better? Then there could be no enmity, for

then you would see that my dearest aim in life is to help the weak and the sorrowful. I have done a great deal of settlement work and — ''

'' Settlement work,'' Zondish repeated scornfully, '' is — '' She snapped her fingers.

'' Yes, largely,'' Rose admitted, ''for society makes a fad of it. Much of it is done for mere show, and the best things of this life are not the show things. And do you suppose that I would spend my life talking about trifles, weeping over silly stories? Do you think that I would seek to establish myself as a leader of an idle society? Miss Zondish, the instinct of usefulness was born within me. And you could never guess the dearest, the tenderest story told to me by my mother. It was this: As a girl down in North Carolina, a poor girl in a log cabin, with only two books in the house, she was out in the yard, doing the family washing, when my father came and asked her to come home with him.''

Annie Zondish had looked down, but now she looked up. '' Then how did you escape being a snob? ''

'' That is a very natural question. But the germ of snobbery was not in my blood.''

'' That is all well enough, but we are off the subject — off from what I intended to say when I saw you standing here, on a spot where justice had just been strangled.''

'' Oh, no, Miss Zondish, we are not off the subject so long as we talk of truth and sympathy. I told you I was glad to meet you, and I meant it, and for this reason: You can teach me how best to help certain people, not in the way of postponing their need, but — ''

'' I could teach you but you would give me no ear. I could tell you to remove the cause — to exterminate the oppressors. Don't you see that you and I can only

be enemies. . . . But I am not so heartless as not to — to appreciate the interest *you* have shown in me. Kindliness from a woman is something novel to me. Women educated me, marked it down to their credit and set me adrift."

"No, we must not be enemies," and now they stood closer together. "We shall have a common aim, and common aims make brothers and sisters. Miss Zondish, come to my house, be my friend, and let us organize a practical system for the betterment of the wretched. Your experience — "

"My experience teaches me that we must kill. Miss Whateley, I thank you for — but I must go."

"No," Rose cried out, catching at her hand. "You must not put such a disappointment on me, for within the past few moments I have built up a high hope. Don't go, please. Promise me that you will come to my house."

"Oh, no. You ask me to throw aside in a moment the aim of a lifetime. Miss Whateley, your drama is too swift."

"Every great drama is swift, and let us play swiftly in the drama of life."

Annie bit her lip. "Somebody has dramatized you. . . . . You ask too much of me, Miss Whateley. It cannot be."

"Oh, but it must be. I feel that you will not withhold your hand when it can be of such help. Think of the little children we can save, you and I. Think of the glowing lamps we can light where now all is darkness. Miss Zondish — Annie — nothing can be accomplished by violence. Sympathy is the greatest power that the world has ever known; and I know that your great and passionate heart is full of sympathy. There is only one

step between violence and gentleness, and I beg of you to take that step. Teach me out of your great storehouse of wisdom. Help me, a really lonely woman who longs to do good in the world. Please — ''

'' Let me go. You are a hypnotist. You would make me weak. I hated you and — now you reproach me with your heart.''

'' No, I do not reproach you. In the name of stricken humanity I implore you to come to my house, and together we will make many a poor heart glad.''

'' I — I didn't know that there was such a woman in this great wilderness of greed and cruelty.''

'' Then you believe me? Say that you do. Say that you will come to my house. Say that we shall be sisters of sympathy.''

And now old Calvin's daughter caught the woman's hand, pressed it to her bosom, and from the anarchist's eyes the tears were flowing. '' I — I will come,'' she said, and Rose's arms were now about her.

'' Yes, my estranged sister now come back to me, and in the grateful eyes of old men and of children we shall read our happiness.''

'' I will come but I must go now. I am going to say something that I had forgotten how to say: God bless you. . . . Let me go.''

'' Yes, you may go in a moment, but you must do as I beg of you. It has begun to rain harder and your shoulders are almost bare. I am going home in a cab and shall not need my cloak. You must take it.''

'' No, no,'' Annie Zondish cried, drawing away, '' I cannot do that.''

'' Yes, from one sister to another; and you don't know how sweetly I shall sleep if you will do me this favor; and when you come we will laugh over this night, but

tenderly, because now is sealed our vow to do good; and we shall hear music where there were only sighs, and in windows where black rags fluttered bright flowers shall bloom."

And old Calvin's daughter took off her cloak, and about the woman's drooping shoulders she wrapped it, laughing her joy and her sympathy.

CHAPTER XLI.

HIS ELDER SISTER

When Howerson returned he found Rose alone, dreamily gazing, not upon the battlement and the warring bowmen, but upon another scene penciled by a kindlier fancy, a troop of happy children, playing. He had been longer than he expected, he said, and hoped that she had not grown impatient. His real hope was that she had found the time of his absence long and wearisome, and his heart landed him a heavy blow when with the smile of truth she declared that she had never spent a season of purer happiness.

"The taxi is waiting. But where is your cloak?"

"Oh, did I have a cloak?"

"Why, I thought so. What became of it?"

"Someone must have taken it away," she laughed. "But no matter. I shall not need it."

"But who could have taken it?"

"You can't explain your mystery and I can't explain mine," she said, enjoying his perplexity.

"A punishment, and after you had agreed to wait?" He looked distressed.

"Let us call it a joke, and forget it. . . I am going."

"Not without some protection from the weather," he declared, and begging her to wait he hastened into the bedroom and brought forth his overcoat, and in it enveloped her as she stood, humorously submitting to his will. His hand was stricken with palsy as he strove to gather

her loosened hair from beneath the collar, and when she turned slightly about to make fun of his awkwardness he was in the act of branding her tresses with a kiss, the thief; but she pretended not to know it, deceitful creature; and down the stairs they went, both talking at once, neither catching a word. The big eyes of the taxi bored the rain-streaked air, and all else was dark, in the wet patter.

"Your coat," she said, handing it out to him, and with it feeling for him in the dark.

"No, no, you'll need it," and she laughed gleefully and told him that it would be easier to explain the absence of a cloak than the presence of a coat. "Take it, please," and he took it, and with it moped up the stairs. He called himself a fool, proved it by his soul, ready enough to give testimony, and sat down looking about the room, darksome now with all the lights turned on. Out of dull objects his eyes plucked the sword, lying in a corner, and he took it up and stood with it in his hand. He saw the vision of cutthroat men, and was thrilled as again he saw frightened countenances falling back from his circle of fire, but another countenance arose, that of Zondish, and he felt a tingle of shame, forgetting the murderous men, to realize that with a sword he had rushed upon a woman. Thinking it all over, it seemed, and how strange, that the woman in her sudden fright had cast toward him a look more of appeal than of hate; and over that he brooded for a long time. Then on the wall he replaced the old sword, put on his overcoat and went down into the street. Walking fast he crossed a bridge, searching for some place the number of which he did not know, for he looked not for figures above doorways but at the shapes of grimy old buildings, forbidding enough in daylight but now

gruesome and ghostly. At a narrow stairway he halted, entered upon it, felt his way up one flight, struck a match, hastened down a hall, struck another match and blew it out as he stood in front of a narrow door. Upon the door he knocked, and a voice that came like a moan bade him come in. He entered, and in front of a fire made of a box knocked to pieces, hovering over it with her face in her hands, sat Annie Zondish. She did not look up, but she said, "I am ready to go with you to jail, and I left the door unlocked so you could come in. Let me think just a moment longer and then I will go with you."

"Annie."

She looked up. She rose. She gazed in mute astonishment.

"Annie, I have come to beg you to forgive me. You dragged me back from death. Like a tender mother you cared for me. And to-night with a sword I turned upon you. I violated my oath, for I would have died rather than to keep it. Those who knew men's souls said that we may be born again in the twinkling of an eye. Thus it was that I was changed. But I am here before you now and I have no sword."

Her hands went up and he thought that she was going to strike him and he shut his eyes and stood motionless. When he looked, her hands were pressed to her face, and between her fingers, tear-streams caught the light. Wordless, he stared his astonishment, and then he turned away, to bend his look upon the crackling fire, wondering at this new mystery in a night of mysteries.

"George."

He turned about and she held forth her hand. Without a word he drew her toward the fire, and they sat down, she on a low chair, he on a box. He took her

hand, silent, and upon her palm, wet with her weeping, he pressed a roll of bank notes and closed her fingers. She strove to pull her hand away, with what would have been an outcry but for its huskiness, but he held her wrist hard, pressing down her fingers tight; and then slowly he spoke:

"I have seen you give not half a loaf, but all. . . . I heard you sing a childhood song to an old Polish Jew who prayed that he might die with the melodies of his mother in his soul."

Against his arm she leaned her weary head, and lightly now her hand lay within his tender clasp. She did not try to draw it from him. "To-morrow I am going away, to be gone several months, perhaps. And when I come back, I am going to confess. A dream into which beautiful visions sometimes arose, will end; but money will come to me out of that dream, and I am going to share it with you, money honestly earned. We will go among the stricken in body and in heart. We will atone."

"Yes," she whispered.

"You are to be — you *are* my sister."

He felt her head shake on his arm. "Your mother, George. I am old."

He laughed softly. "Oh, no, you have the strength, the color, the looks and the black hair of your prime. You are my elder sister. The younger, poor wayward genius, sleeps in India." He fell into silence, brooding, and then burst out: "Ha, but let us be cheerful. The drama — "

She clutched his arm. "It was glorious," she said. "I have seen Salvini, Booth, but nothing like that. There will never again be acting like it. Down flew the sword from the wall, and — "

"It was only a desperation."

"Only! And is not that what great dramatic art has tried in vain to be? . . . What a night!"

He got up, she with him, her hand on his arm. "I will find you when I come back. Good night. I—" and then he stood cut off from speech, gazing. On a trunk against the wall lay Rose Whateley's cloak.

He looked into the woman's eyes, standing back from him, and with head not in humiliation bowed, she said: "Yes, it is her cloak. She compelled me to take it. I couldn't resist her. I thought that there must have been some sort of trickery, and as the other cowards were running over each other down the street, I stole back, and there she stood. I knew who she was, but pretended not to. If she had started in at first with soft words I would have hardened against her, but she didn't. I don't know what she said, but I felt the balm of her presence, George; felt that this beautiful creature of health and strength and grace wanted to be my friend, my sister. Yes, I heard her say it; and then her arm was about me and—there lies her cloak. . . . I have always had my soft moods. Often when they thought I was sneaking about with a dagger, I was in my room heartbroken because I had just looked upon distress that I was not able to relieve. But now it seems that my vengeance mood has gone from me to stay. I tried to call it back as I sat here alone, but it would not come and I know that it will not come again. I am getting old, George."

"You are young and beautiful, your soul; and down the leafy road, at the turn where wild roses glow upon the bank, sly-eyed happiness, a boy with fingers stained with berry juice, peeps out to leap forth with a shout and give you joyous chase."

She smiled sadly, taking his hand to bid him good-bye. "Good night, sister."

She bent toward him and reverently on the brow he kissed her; and he left her standing there in the twilight of the fire. Now swiftly back to his room he went, muttering, "What a night! In this grim commonplace of greed, what a night!"

Out he came on the morrow, into the flashing pearl of the sun's first wink of morn, the fading stars seeming to drip with the cool rains of the night.

In the station Joyce was waiting for him. "What, dawn-hawk, are you here?" Howerson cried, grasping his friend as if a year had droned between the evening and the day.

"Of course. Where did you think I'd be? By the way, I rushed through with my work, and about eleven last night hustled over to your cave, and found it dark. I hammered on the door, and heard rats scampering, but no other evidence of life; and so I came away."

"I should hope so. But why the deuce did you come out so early this morning? There was no need of it."

"That's my business. Say, but you look fine this morning, old fellow; like a winner. You used to look every once in a while as if you expected bad news in the next mail; but now the news seems to have been good. How about it?"

"Wasn't bad. At any rate it didn't announce bankruptcy."

"Good old dame after all, George — the world."

"Yes, cracks you on the head with her crutch, and if you smile, she anoints the wound."

"Maybe if we laugh she won't hit us at all." Shaking hands as Howerson's train was called out, they laughed and parted.

Following his instructions, Howerson got off at Hoopgood, spent a day in the coal mines, telegraphed a favorable report, wired a message to Yal Watkins and resumed his way toward the West. On the platform at Rockdale, there amid the excitement of the one great thrill of the day, the handling of three mail sacks, the cries of the bus driver, the rush of the telegrapher to speed onward the news that the train had arrived; there amid the heart tremors of girls stolen from home to view this halted plunge from the world of dreams whence one day would come romance with lovelight in eye and diamond in shirt; there where the corpse of the old man was shoved into the car to be baggaged away to a distant grave; there in the steam and the smoke blown back from the stewing engine; there in the last glimmerings of the day, was Col. Watkins, most important man in town. Tripping over a leash wherewith a boy reined in his cat-excited dog, Watkins reached the Poet.

"Help me, George, to hold my dignity unruffled till we get away from this crowd."

"Dignity! Where did you ever find it? Our carriage of the Old Regime, Colonel, does it await?"

"Ah, verily, not like the fretful but the dozing porcupine. This way to the Tuilleries." Off they darted for the hack, Watkins grabbing at Howerson's "grip." The old busman ambled forward and took the suit case, shoved it up, raking its yellow hide with the head of a nail, and then announced the promise of a swift departure by calling "Fare please." Ready enough came forth coin from pockets of passengers eager to proceed, but progress was balked by a fat madam with an Angora cat in a cage big enough for a leopard. Couldn't find her purse, couldn't have lost it, never did such a thing,

preposterous. Cat reaches out to pluck souvenir of fleece from a woolly poodle, innocently musing in the lap of Miss Tabitha — row. Fat madam admonishes Angora to be more choice in selection of associates, but can't find purse.

"How late do they have supper?" a hungry wretch inquires of the universe at large; and fat madam answers, "It makes no difference how late or how early, I'm going to find my purse." Wretch says, "I hope so." Angora makes another motion and the poodle howls, whereupon Miss Tabitha gives it a tender coddle, wondering why the woman over in the corner doesn't keep her brat from squawling. "I know I had that purse," fat madam declares, and an old sinner man mutters, "Bet you did."

"Go on!" someone cries.

But the busman shakes his head. "My orders are to collect fare before turning a wheel."

Then Col. Watkins says, "Drive on," and without a word he mounts his perch and drives, passengers, cat and dog looking with gratitude upon the most important man in town.

Suddenly fat madam cries out, "Stop, stop, I say! I have found it."

"Onward!" shouts the colonel, and up to the hotel they rattle, everybody laughing.

After supper the two friends shut themselves up in Howerson's room, to throw off their dignity, they said. "When it comes to characters," remarked the colonel, "we've got 'em here. You know they skipped thrifty Iowa and came here where they could be shiftless without reproach. These were mostly poor whites from the South, afraid of nothing on earth except work. Why, they'd laugh at a gun, when a hoe would scare 'em to

death. But we've got all sorts here. Some I want you to meet, particularly a shrewd old Jew who swears he made fifty thousand dollars playing poker and lost it all in the clothing business; but more particularly I want you to know Father Ben, an old Belgian priest. He and I are great friends; we sit and talk some nights till twelve. But tell me why you are here, and then I'll make a confession, my talk about Father Ben having led up to the same."

"I am here, Colonel, to cheat the few for the good of the many." Then he explained the project. "And now your confession."

With a loud crack the hip of the Colonel's rocking chair flew out of joint. He got up, set the bone, sat down with care and was about to begin his recital when Howerson said, in allusion to the recent feat of surgery, "If you need any lint, Doctor, I'll scrape my shirt."

"Ha," retorted the anatomist, rocking carefully, "I know that in the interest of science you would not only contribute the lint from your shirt but the nap from your overcoat, but my dear patron of arts I object to being called 'Doctor.' When you were here the first time somebody heard you call me Colonel Watkins and in that title I am established and, as you may have observed, influential. Out here there are two sorts of doctors, man and horse, both saluted as 'Doc.' And that reminds me of an incident. There came from the state university the boss L.L.D. of the shop, to address the high school here, and one of our staunch citizens hearing him called 'Doctor,' asked him if he were a horse or just a man doctor; and you may know the starch of the great man had suffered when he answered, 'Sir, I am a Doctor of Laws.'

"The staunch one pricked up his ears like a livery

stable bulldog. ' That so? I knowed the law was damn sick but I didn't know they'd called in a doctor.' There are numerous ' docs ' here, but I'm the only colonel, as my rival was shipped off in a baggage car this evening. Grasp? ''

'' Yea, Colonel, and I beseech pardon for my slip, but ' impart,' said the Dane.''

'' You may not play-act when I get down into it,'' said Watkins; and then for a brief silence he was serious as if an unhappy memory were passing through his mind. But he brightened.

'' List thee. One night about two weeks ago, after a day of worries to me and to my well-earned military title, I went into our ' Gentlemen's Cafe,' sat down at the large square table, shoved from in front of me the pickles eaten by acid till they looked like the prohibitionist's diagram of a drunkard's maw, greeted the widowed celery, sighed over a bowl of tear-stained crackers, wondering what I could eat, when I noticed by the spread of a napkin, the positions of knife, fork and plate, that the place just in front of me was taken.

'' About this time in came a big Scotchman who in broad tweed said to the waiter that he would have it now, evidently his meal, ordered some time before. The waiter brought in a beefsteak about the size of an elephant's ear, and placed it before him. Then from a cool chest he got out two pint-bottles of old ale. These he uncorked and into a big pewter mug poured the foamy garner of both bottles, filling the mug, and the beads burst like the glad laughter of youth. All that I had ever read of the old inn, with dovecote, spreading tree, genial landlord — all the poetry and romance I had ever read or heard my bookish old father talk about, and he was an English actor — all came back to me. This

tantalizing Scot busied himself with the steak, and I sat there breathing beneath my belt, ' Why the devil don't you drink?' But when he had eaten about a third of his meat, and when I had waved aside my own object in coming into the place, he took up that pewter loving cup with both hands and — and fetched a pull such as Martin Luther would have envied; and he put it down with an ' Ah-ha-ha,' right at me, and the clinging beads were bursting on his red lips. Right there I slipped, George. I — "

" Ya! "

" Slipped and grabbed about me to keep from falling, and couldn't lay hold. But at this moment down came a grip on my shoulder. I looked up and there stood old Father Ben, the priest. ' Walk out with me,' he said; and I went out with him, drooling like a horse grazing on white clover. I had given the old man my history, George, and he knew that you had picked me up after I'd been down so long. As we walked he said, ' My boy, there are some of them that can do it, and there are some of us that cannot.' He didn't lecture me, just reminded me of a truth that I knew so well. Then I went back alone, and a thousand pewter mugs couldn't have made the ground slippery for me. That was my last temptation."

Howerson had been alarmed, but now he smiled. " You are all right, and you may well believe, as I do, that it was your last temptation. Let me tell you, my dear Colonel — "

The colonel bowed.

" Let me tell you that if it had not meant sure downfall of your prosperity and hence your respectability, all the advice and moral lecturing in homily's inexhaust-

ible storehouse couldn't have kept ale beads from bursting on your lips that night. I know you, Colonel."

"Ah, as the devil knows a handbook."

"And mind you, I don't mean to detract from old Father Ben. He saved you for the moment, but for your own strength old Father Time instead of Father Ben would just about have had you by now. But the priest, how well he knows the weakness of 'mortal mind,' as Mrs. Eddy calls it. He is the indulgent elder brother of the wayward; and there is a reason why he should know more of human nature than the average preacher can possibly know."

"Beats him to it," said the colonel.

"Yes, in a walk. Catholics take their shortcomings to the priest, but from the preacher we hide our foibles."

"Right, George, and it's because the preacher lives apart from men."

"Yes," said Howerson. "Watch a party of men talking, joking, laughing. Preacher comes up; subject changed, sissified out of hypocritical deference to the preacher's cloth."

"Duly acknowledged. . . . Well, how's the drama?"

Howerson settled back in his chair as if at last he had surrendered to the encroachment of a mood which with forced gayety he had vainly fought.

"The love interest," Watkins persisted.

"A kindly and unconscious mockery, I'm afraid. Yal, woman has progressed until she can step out of romance into friendship. They have schooled and suffragetted her until she is a companion instead of a sweetheart. But our drama demands old-fashioned love."

"Got it, hasn't it?" the colonel inquired.

"On one side, yes."

"Well, that's as it should be to sustain interest among those who insist upon love's speculative misery, and which I think is quite as essential as — I'm balled up. Toss me a line."

"Quite as essential as love's reciprocal joy — I understand. But coming to the Hecuba of sad truth, I am gaffed past floundering while in violet waters she plays unhooked."

"I'm not on the ground, but I have a notion that she is waiting for you to overpower her with your strength. Inheriting much of the old man's character, she is fighting you, which is herself, in this instance, and — "

"But the old man never surrenders, Yal."

"Ah, but he'd acknowledge it if you knocked him down, wouldn't he? When did you see her last? Tell me about it."

Without infringing upon his determination to make his first confession to Whateley, alone, Howerson permitted a vaporous vision to gather itself into the dew of words: "And there I stood, agued in an ecstasy, with the gnarled gold of her tresses in my hand, this hand that does not look as if once it had held the universe, and when I would have kissed — "

"I see, you fell down," said the colonel. "You wanted to kiss her hair, and your knees knocked you out. You thought she wouldn't like it, but at that moment, George, she would have been mightily tickled. In one of the intense minutes to be ticked off in the future, she'll forget her own strength and rejoice in yours."

"Let's go to bed."

There in the dark, the glimpse of a star revealed by

the gaping of a window shade, there with the frail house shaking in a wind that blew not thunder from the west but breaths of coming summer from the south, Howerson lay wondering if shrewd old Yal were right, that she would have liked it had he kissed her hair.

CHAPTER XLII.

WORKING HIS SCHEME

On the following day Howerson began operations which were active enough but which, reviewed at night, appeared to have been aimless and without accomplishment. All the arts and devices which in past "promotion" he had stumbled upon, now needed to be resharpened and redecorated like the feathered troll designed for waters whipped foamy by persistent fishers. And as the days filled out the first week the promoter may not have been able to specify progress, but knew that it had been made. Acquaintance with the ground, organization and the systematizing of schemes, moved forward his campaign; and by the time the second week drew to a close, he had acquired signatures from pens doggedly suspicious, but which yielded finally under the moral spell of the farmer's ancient tempter, cupidity.

The influence of Watkins was of great and immediate advantage, and his active shaking of the branch brought down the fruit, red and yellow, on the ground. On brief notice he could appear as innocent a lout as ever gulped the delights of a brass band or gazed in awe upon a camel's hump. He now took up gladly as his mission the conversion of the smaller land owner, while the Poet spread his own endeavors among the larger fry, housed with them over Sunday, gave rhymes to maids, talked sanctity of marriage to matrons, and

permitted the booted "Hector, tamer of horses," to beat him in religious argument. In village halls he addressed meetings; at a "sociable" he auctioned off a pair of blue socks adorned with red heels, the devotional product of a dame from whose tongue, sweetly bred to scandal, no handsome girl was safe; and in a barn he umpired a cock-fight.

In his room at the hotel he laughed with the colonel and called himself the most scoundrelly chameleon that ever changed its hue. Often at night they had company, Father Ben, the priest, and Gus Wormsier, the Jew who in the clothing business had lost fifty thousand dollars hard-earned at poker. Father Ben's soul was as rare as a June bird singing on December's crest. He had turned sixty, but his heart was a warm melody, chanting him to his work; and his great dark eyes were soft, as if holding in endearment the picture of many a tender scene. But Watkins said that justice sometimes roused him to acts of quick chastisement, and this may have been true, but surely when he knocked two rebellious heads together he did it to save the breaking of a hundred bones.

Wormsier was of a Hebrew family from the old South, and would speak of Yankees as if he had never turned a trick himself. He would not have made an acceptable vaudeville Jew, with "sure" and "belief me." He knew no gallery Yiddish, but his mind was as acutely Hebraic as if, expelled from Spain along with eight hundred thousand others of his race, he had written that history-noted letter from Portugal to a friend left behind: "The climate is good, the people idiots, and we shall soon own everything."

Nothing seemed to afford Wormsier so keen an enjoyment as an argument with Father Ben, into which the

old man sometimes humorously but never in seriousness suffered himself to be drawn.

"The intellectual trouble with the Jew," said Father Ben one evening, "is that he regards himself as the history of the world; and his religious belief is that success is sufficient atonement for everything."

"No," declared Wormsier. "We take back the goods, and what more atonement can you ask for?"

"That is well enough for the evil actually committed, but you have no atonement for intended evil, and that is nearer to the purification of the soul. Did you ever confess an intended evil?"

Howerson was listening intently. He thought that Yal was about to speak, and with his hand laid upon the colonel's knee he whispered, "Hush."

"Don't know that I understand what you mean by intended evil," Wormsier replied. "But I'll tell you this: If I had made up my mind to sell a man a coat for ten dollars and saw by his face I could get twelve, and I got it, do you think I would tell him he might have had it for ten? Not me. And suppose I had made up my mind to punch a weak-looking fellow in the nose, but saw him lick two men as big as I am, do you think I would go to him and say, 'Forgive me, I was going to punch your nose?' Not me. But wait a minute. You spoke about the Jew and history. Why, all the religion you've got you stole from the Jews, except purgatory."

Father Ben sat in a big chair, rocking, enjoying his cigar. "All but purgatory. But say that we are willing to make atonement, Gus. Say that we keep purgatory and give the Jews the station farther south."

"Ha," cried Wormsier, "we could trust you to give the Jews the worst of it. Atonement! How can we

atone for an intention? By confession to the one we intended to injure? Imagine our friend Howerson here making a confession like that."

"He would, I am sure," said Father Ben. "Suppose that if by any possibility he had been wrought upon until there was murder in his heart, do you think his heart could ever be pure again unless he confessed it? And that, too, before he had, by some good and repentant turn, laid his intended victim under such obligation as would seem to insure forgiveness. Do you believe he would smother his confession?"

"No!" came from Howerson in utterance almost a cry, and then he turned it into a laugh. "Of course not. By the way, Father, over in the Spring Valley neighborhood the majority of the land owners are communicants of your church, and I wish you could see your way clear toward helping me there."

"I can if you prove to me that by so doing I shall serve their interest as well as yours."

"I can do that. The road will increase land values from ten to fifteen percent."

"Wait," cried Wormsier. "Wait a day or two, Father, till I go over there and get a few options. Wait."

Then the colonel spoke up. "And if we wait till you have had a few more business failures, Gus, you can not only put up money for options on land but buy the entire road for cash."

Father Ben roared out an appreciation in which there was no malice, and with a genial grin Gus ducked his head. A clock began to strike, Wormsier counting. "What's that? Nine? Right now I go to a christening, my friend Stramm, Lutheran, sausages and beer. Good night."

Father Ben soon took his leave, and Howerson went

with him, walking with him out beneath the stars. When they had come to a corner of a street near the old man's home, the dark spire of his church catching with its gilded cross a beam from pagan Venus, the Poet halted.

"Won't you come in and stop a while, Mr. Howerson? I have some old books that I have not yet shown you, some rare and curious pages, executed by Philip Pigouchet in 1487. Come in."

"No, I thank you, not to-night." Yet he lingered, gazing upward at the pagan light glinting the cross. . . . "Father, I have often wondered if priests, so intimate with the weaknesses and the misfortunes of man — " he hesitated.

"Yes, my son."

"I have often wondered if they did not believe that upon the conscience of the Protestant, the man of the world, there did not lie a canker, a something that a Catholic would confess to his priest."

"We are supposed to confess everything."

"I know. But you spoke of atonement for an evil not committed. Doesn't the priest believe that every Protestant man lives and perhaps dies with such an evil in his heart? "

"My son, we are not that narrow. Every good Protestant must confess to God."

"Yes, but God already knows, and confession to one who knows requires no courage. Don't misunderstand me. I am not worried over my soul. But I may worry over a sense of weakness on my part. I am talking to you the man and not the priest."

"But would you have brought up this subject if I had not been a priest? "

"It was something you said that brought it up, and if you hadn't been a priest you might not have said it.

. . . As you are a man whom I believe to be thoroughly good, let me say that I am soon to make a confession to a hard mortal, and to me it may mean a lifetime of desperate unhappiness. The woman I would give my soul to possess will shudder and hate me, and the man, her father — ''

'' You must tell me no more. I cannot advise you, other than to counsel you to be true to your conscience, your soul.''

With warm handclasp they parted; and when Howerson returned to his room where Watkins sat waiting for him, the Poet said: '' My dear martial companion, walking homeward just now from a stroll with reverend and ancient theology, I wondered as to how many varieties of fool a fairly active man can play.''

CHAPTER XLIII.

AND THE WRETCH DIDN'T KNOW IT

Eight weeks passed and but little more remained for Howerson to do. The contractor had arrived with a force of men. Construction was about to begin, and Whateley, informed every day as to progress, had dictated his congratulations, "Very good."

The Poet had written to Rose, a humorous letter, but in among the lines his spirit stole; for humor, heritage of the poet and the prophet, is truth softened with the glow of romance. . . . Then there were days of anxious waiting, but not many, for one morning there came a large square packet that seemed to laugh loud his name, and out of the town he walked with it unopened, wondering whether the villagers whom he met did not know that he had it.

Out across a vacant place he walked, where a tethered calf left off his browsing on dewy grass to look at him with guying up-turn of lip, down a briary lane beneath swift-growing saplings in tender leaf; down over low sward to a rivulet, overturing upon shining gravel the opera sung by nesting birds.

Here beneath an elm he sat down to read: "Dear Pal." How else could she begin? "Did you expect her to throw herself into your arms, you fool?" he mused. But after all how frank she was, and humorous too, with friendly truth. Friendly, yes. But read it: How long he had been in writing, and she was tempted to shame him for his silence, but wouldn't. She

understood. "It was because you fancy yourself under an obligation to me and didn't want me to think that it was on this account that you wrote, as one who acknowledges a debt after having been forbidden to mention it. I admit that I don't make this very clear. Why do you say that I am the most wonderful woman in the world? Don't you know that I shall be tempted, after such extravagance, to look with suspicion on everything you say? I know that I am not a remarkable woman. If I were, and with my opportunities, I should achieve something. As it is, I say to myself, 'What can I do?' Genius — you called me a genius, don't forget that — genius never asks itself such questions. Genius finds itself forced to do things. Genius is not a self-enforced industry; it is more often a dreamy laziness compelled. I don't know what it is, but I know that I am not it. I don't like to be called a genius. You seem to think it the greatest of all praise, and it may be to a man but not to a woman. But when you call me wonderful — shall I confess that I like it? Yes. How we love — " scratched out — "like to be glamoured over with error. Dr. Henshaw — Oh, I must tell you of an outing.

"Little Calvin had to go fishing out at Fox River. Pete had gone there once, so father decided or rather *had* to decide to take Calvin. No, Calvin didn't want Pete to go; he had not gone with Pete. But he would not hear to going in the auto. Anybody could go that way. Pete had gone on an excursion train, and so must he, and we had to convince him that the train we were to take was an excursion. That was settled. Now came the question of lunch, not luncheon. Pete said that luncheon meant cake and jelly and was fit only for girls. The right lunch consisted of dried beef, wieners

and kraut, the wieners and kraut to be cooked near the river bank in a tin can, oyster or tomato, the latter somewhat preferred. Father rebelled against the kraut, and, oh, how determinedly! He declared that it would drive all other excursionists off the train. Then Calvin: 'Pete's kraut didn't. If I can't have the kraut I won't go.' Then Father: 'Paul, get the kraut.'

"Arrived at the station, Paul with the basket, tin cans rattling, there was another hitch. Pete had traveled forward in the smoking car. Father: 'I positively forbid you to ride in the smoker. Turn about, Paul, and we'll go home.' Calvin: 'All right. If I can't go like Pete I don't want to go. You said I might. Aunt Rose, gran'pa won't keep his word. He's a ditcher.' Father: 'Go into the smoker, Paul.' And I had to go too, but the windows were up and I didn't mind it.

"Out in the country the air was one great slow wave of perfume, with little thrilling scents for spray; and I wished that you might have been with us, for I know you would have enjoyed it. Calvin spoke of you, time and again, and he had insisted on wearing the wolfskin coat, in defiance of the warm weather, until reminded that Pete had worn no wolf's hide, and this point he surrendered. . . . What a delight it was to gather up brushwood to make a fire down near the river's edge where the ripples whispered their music among the rushes. And the lunch! Father ate like a boy and I like a heathen; and how happy we all were — " Hang it, why should she be happy! Couldn't she have said that under the circumstances they did fairly well? Happy! But read on:

"And then Calvin caught a sunfish! I wish you could have seen him. He buttoned it up — ugh! — fluttering in his pocket, wore it home and would have slept with

it that night had not warm weather asserted its argument. After lunch Paul and father dozed beneath the trees. Calvin spied a gopher, chased him to his hole in the ground, and I had to sit there with him and watch. 'Jiggers, he's coming!' he would cry whenever I'd move. . . . Yes, we wished that you had been there.

"And now I have something to tell that may interest you, but you must not ask me any whys or wherefores. Two days after you left, Annie Zondish came to see me and since then comes often, known to old Paul, the only one who sees her, as Miss Evans. We are carrying out a dark and desperate scheme, that of going among the wretched, not with advice but with food and clothes. Not in a hundred years could you guess whom we have taken into our confidence and who goes with us. Guess! You can't. Dr. Henshaw. There, I told you so. And you would be amused to observe how human he is getting to be — actually human. At first he protested, declared that his work lay among the intellectual, but I told him that if Peter's and Paul's work had lain in that field the seeds of the gospel never could have sprouted.

"At first he thought to inquire into the religious belief of those starving dwellers in hovels, urging old men who could hardly understand a word he uttered to beware of the dark error of popery. We found an intelligent old man, an American, 'down and out,' not on account of any fault of his own, but because he was old. We set him up at an advantageous corner, in the news business, adding cigars and tobacco. The doctor objected. He said that the Lord would not prosper a man who sold tobacco. 'Well, *He* may not but something does,' said Annie, and she reminded him of the wealth of the tobacco trust. So, generally he has given in, and has

become quite companionable as well as useful. It is surprising how much Annie knows. She is acquainted with every phase of misfortune, and is wonderfully patient. She rarely speaks of herself, but she acknowledged yesterday that while it was not possible for her to be happy, yet she was more contented now in her work than she had ever been before. I have not asked her any questions concerning herself, or as to why she and the others went to your room that night. Isn't that wonderful patience on my part? Several times she has spoken of you. She says you have a great soul. And what did I say? I won't tell you. . . ."

Almost a love letter and the wretch didn't know it. . . . Up the rivulet he went, sat down and read again, seeming to fancy that a change of scene might bring out new meanings. He walked about till the court house bell hammered out the hour of noon, then went back to the hotel and entered the dining room just as Col. Watkins was in the gracious act of smoothing out his napkin over his knees.

During the afternoon Howerson had no chance to read his letter again, but in the evening while in his room he sat with it, and was musing over it when he heard the town's most important man, in the corridor, assuring the big blonde from Sweden that unless his acute recollection played him a scaly trick she was the handsomest thing that ever jollied his eyes. The letter was too sacred to be discussed with even an old friend, and the Poet hid it away in his coat pocket where his heart could beat against it.

"Yal, after I've returned to Chicago, if by any peculiar chance you should lose your job, promise that without losing confidence in yourself, you will come straightway to me. Will you?"

Latterly when Howerson called him Yal, the colonel was suspicious of something serious. "I promise ye, soothsayer of the muses, but why this sudden reduction to the ranks? Why do you pluck off my colonel's star? Have I failed to draw sword in the presence of the enemy? Do I leap behind a tree when ordered to lead the charge? 'Impart,' said the Dane."

"Colonel, I beg your pardon. Your star is as secure and as fixed as if gleaming in the Milky Way. Misfortune can not pull you down to the ranks from which you have so valiantly risen. But your field of campaign might be shifted."

"You mean, George, that Whateley might fire me?"

"I mean that if by any freak on his part he should, you must come in all haste to me."

"But didn't he tell you I was an invaluable man?"

"He did. But suppose I should fall and bring you down with me."

"You would find me dusting myself, thankful for past favors. But I'd continue to remain here, George. It's pretty hard for some men to move their titles to a new community, and I'm afraid I am one of them. With very little cash I have managed to get in on a few things in this town. The wisdom tooth may be a good thing, but about the best thing a fellow can do is to cut an age-tooth. Then he'll have something to chew with. Liquor prevents the cutting of this tooth, but it pops through the gums like the coming up of a toadstool, in a night, when we know that we have given to booze its final pass-up."

"Good, Colonel, I hold your stirrup. . . . If there should be a shake-up, I'll come out to see you."

"Yea, and on my wall you'll find an emblem, the pen and the sword crossed. I am free again, George, to

shove out my bark upon the hitherto choppy frith of matrimony. I may not, but of late a certain widow has come into my wide-awake dream. She has a bit of land shouldering up pretty well against the town, with a fair house and a garden where I have seen cabbages growing in the promise of rare development. I saw her first in this manless Eden of vegetables, searching with gloved hands for cutworms hidden among the clods. I halted and offered her the benefit of my experience. This appealed to her. Doubtless no man had ever before that day engaged her on a subject so stripped of life's insipid vanities. From cutworms we turned, as acquaintance ripened, to the small bug that makes a cabbage leaf look like a lace handkerchief. I could see she was thrilled, and my own emotions arose. We passed lightly over grasshoppers and in due time came to the cricket, the insect of sentiment, harming no cabbage but filled with heaven's dew, singing for poets and novelists who know all things except nature. But am I giving you too much at one sitting? "

" My dear Colonel, no sitting is too long for love," the Poet laughed, glad that travesty could offer relief from brooding, from wondering if the letter against which his heart was beating could mean love.

" You are an honor to your muse, my dear Poet. . . From the cricket we strolled by natural sequence to domestic joys, to firesides; and she invited me into her house, where boughs still in fresh bloom were heaped up in the fireplace. Since then I have happened along at times, and the fact that she always seems to look upon my coming as an event — er — "

" Falling in the nick of convenience," the Poet suggested. " When we chance upon a woman and don't put her out in any way, we are welcome indeed."

"Ha," cried the colonel, "your head, though young to behold, yet is saged with the wisdom of many winters. . . . . No matter when I called, I was there at the right time. And her accomplishments would astonish you. Her butter takes the premium at the county fair, and her plum preserves — let me tell you about 'em: They made the ancient professor of a school for young ladies forget his dignity and stalk off down the road smacking his mouth with a pop like a mule driver's whip. Of course it is natural that with all these virtues there should be at least one drawback, and there is one. She has a daughter whose occupation it is to hang over the front gate."

"But the gate can be removed," said the Poet.

"George, you have wiped out the only obstacle. But understand that I don't intend to call on this kind soul for help in the way of marriage unless compelled by — er — sentiment or misfortune. And if you should lose that girl — but you can't. It's impossible. You are going to marry her. The cards are dealt. The old man may fume, but she will walk away with you. Why should fate construct the play if it were not intended you should marry her? I tell you it's a cinch."

In the colonel's positivism there was encouragement. He knew old lank-jawed Madam Fate, pale in black robe and decrepit to look upon, but in action swift and powerful, a murderess of weak children, a flatterer of strong men, a genial joker when she chooses to be — with her bony fingers writing undying verse, drama, signing marriage contracts, penning sermons, scoring music — a nymph, a slut. Old Yal had carried water for her, and many a time had she kicked him down the stairs into the filthy cellar and shrieked in wild laughter as his head knocked upon the stones. But now she had punished

him till she was tired, and in her weariness she mumbled to him her secrets.

The Poet slept better for having talked with Yal, and in the early night when day has died its always melancholy death, and when in hope most men are weakest, he now was strongest, listening to the dogmatism of his friend, inspired jargon, slang of the kindly gods: "It's a cinch." But sometimes his heart smote him with its old questioning. A week passed and he had not written again to Rose. He was afraid of his pen.

One evening he sat in dark reverie, wondering in reproach why Yal had not come, when there came Father Ben, his broad good-natured face like a full moon rising up red through the brush.

"I have come to tell you," he said as he sat down, "that to-day I visited the Spring Valley neighborhood and that there will be no further opposition in that quarter."

"I am most grateful, Father. Is there any possible way I can serve you?"

"No way, my son, except to remember me when you are gone away and sometimes to send me a book, some little thing forgotten of the world."

"I thank you, Father. You add a new pleasure to old book stalls. Whenever I come across anything I think you'd like, I'll send it."

"Ah, yes, if you please. . . . At different times I have heard you and the colonel hint at some sort of drama, glanced at by both of you. Send me a copy if you can get it handily."

"Oh, we were talking about our own lives, written by Fate. It is one of our grim jokes."

"Grim it may be, my son, but not a joke. It all has a purpose, and not as a joke to be laughed at in the

end. We may strive, scoff, but we cannot make a jest of our own unhappiness. Great history has her broad highway laid out, and down it she must march; but not the little histories, the narrow, personal path we must choose for ourselves. So it is well that we follow good counsel and choose wisely."

"Ah," said the Poet, "I often think along that line. But we choose and don't know that we have chosen wisely. We grope in continual experiment."

"If we choose without the right counsel, yes; if we listen only to the voices of earth. When you travel your path as far as I have traveled mine, you then can know the little value in the most of the things you have been taught. There is but one great knowledge — God. And that knowledge you seem to ignore when you talk of your drama written by Fate. Let not your play be written by so whimsical a pen."

"Ha, but I can't help myself. I am not in a position to dictate, to refuse or to accept. What I would most abhor might be thrust upon me. If the world has her broad highway laid out and which she is compelled to take, man, being a part of the world, to himself the whole world in fact, is shoved into his path and sent stumbling onward, up hill or down as the way may lead. We — "

He was glad that Yal came in to break into his fruitless talk, and Father Ben appeared rather pleased, for nearer akin to his humor was simple human nature, rarely giving his speaking self to subjects which no metaphysic wrestler can gather on his hip and land squarely on the ground.

Colonel Watkins wore a rose, pinned on his coat by fingers gently deft when not grabbling for cutworms among the clods, and his newly-trimmed beard gleamed

sharp-pointed in the light. He laughed at their sober faces with a jollity that floated out to cheer the night air. Ha, no metaphysics now, sighing lover and learned priest.

And when the night was old, and the two friends were alone, the Poet's hungry heart cried out for food. "Yal, tell me, old man, if you really think that she — "

"Oh, it's a cinch, George. You can't get away from it."

"You really feel it? "

"I would bet my immortal crown," the colonel swore, which might not have seemed a rash wager, but it was mellow bell music to the Poet, and soothed him with its chimes.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TOO WEAK NOW

On the following evening, when Howerson had walked forth to muse alone, pacing a restless beat through the early dusk, he was startled by a light touch on his shoulder. Involuntarily he squared himself as he wheeled about to confront — Yal.

"You might as well kill a man as scare him to death. Why this stealthy footpad tread and fearsome touch?"

"An experiment, George."

"More than that! He tempts fate who creeps up stealthily behind —"

"An experiment, George. Why start so? Why mouth your fear? There is something you dread — and expect."

"Nay, Colonel, the bolt has shot. This was but the recoil."

"So you might have said on many occasions. What do you fear?"

"I fear no man."

"Nor woman, I suppose. Out with it, George."

"Now, Yal —"

"I know there is *something* you still dread; you show it every day. And when I find those who show an undue interest in your whereabouts —"

"Ah!"

"I wonder if the two parts link together to make a chain of truth. There was Annie Zondish, and now — Hudsic."

"Hudsic!" For the life of him, Howerson could not forbear the cry.

"He is here. The town marshal has done me the favor of putting a man to watch him. You don't fear him, George?" There was wonder as well as inquiry in his tone.

"Why, Yal?"

"He's a goner, George. He looks bad. He looks like a man in the last stages of —"

"Of desperate resolve. I must find him. Do you know where?"

"The Preston House. The hang-out of palmists, clairvoyants, book agents —"

"Let us go there."

Howerson went with him to a desolate shack, to find the marshal standing within the shadows of a tumble-down shed next the alleyway.

"He's a sick man, Colonel Watkins," he said to Yal. "How-do, Mr. Howerson. Friend of yours — Hudsic?"

"Yes, I want to see him."

Up a creaky stairway, down a drafty hall, they came to a warped, blistered door, agape on one hinge. Without ceremony the marshal pushed it open. There on a cot lay Hudsic, now past fearing indeed. Toward the poet he turned his rusting eyes and in a weak voice bade him sit down, eyeing Howerson in silence until Watkins and the marshal had stepped out, and then the professor said:

"I am too weak to kill you now, Mr. Howerson."

"Yes, Hudsic, and you always were."

"Ha, perhaps. But I shall be stronger," and with his bony hands he fingered at the blanket on his breast. "I shall be stronger, as strong as Moy, the Chinaman."

"He was the only one among you that had nerve."

The professor fingered at the blanket, plucked a raveling from it. "A sublime character, Mr. Howerson." He rolled the raveling into a woolly pill and dropped it on his breast.

"Batterson, Henk — where are they?"

"Batterson and I went to Milwaukee, where, as a street preacher he gathered five dollars at one emotional meeting; a fortune in our hungered condition, Mr. Howerson. But to Batterson money meant gin — enough to kill him. A three days' drunk put him in prime condition; then he tried to sober up. The next day he was dead. The other members of the executive committee were headed for California when I last heard from them. But this information possesses no interest for you, Mr. Howerson."

"Not much, Professor. But no matter in what direction they are headed, they will meet justice."

"A fallacy, Mr. Howerson, if you mean punishment, and that is the only justice that the law knows anything about. But I am taking your time, Mr. Howerson."

The poet turned toward the door, but halted and said: "Professor, I will see to it that you are made as comfortable as possible, and that your wants are supplied."

The marshal was walking up and down, to keep guard over his suspicious character. "I want you to see that this man is well taken care of," said Howerson. "Get a pleasant room for him, employ a nurse, and if I am not here, present the bill to Colonel Watkins who will send it to me."

At the hotel Howerson found waiting a letter from Whateley, penciled on the soft leaf of a pad, bold in the old man's grasping hand. "As your work there is done, stop off on your way back and look into the resources of a struggling electric line at Grapley, Ill."

He did not say, "Come in to dinner"; did not say, "We shall be delighted to see you." Howerson, with a low and melancholy droop of eye, handed the scrawling mandate to Watkins. The colonel gave it as his opinion that Whateley's meaning was clear enough, Howerson answering that in its clearness lay the cause of present worry.

Nothing remained but to pack up and this Howerson proceeded to do, compressing into his suit case more sighs than "materialistic accouterment," the observant and sympathetic Watkins declared. When the final sigh had been thinned out on top of the cargo, along with some leaves of Missouri tobacco, the lid forced down and the lock sprung, the traction promoter of the grassy slope was ready to appraise thinned-out electricity in Illinois.

In the evening the two friends went to the railway station, and in the early moon, "silvering the distant hem of night," they walked up and down the platform waiting for a train which the agent said was on time, lying with placid ease.

"In order that I might give you a final report," said the colonel, "I slipped over to the widow's this afternoon."

"She's well, I hope."

"Yes, middling. But in the dewy flash of morn, as nearly as she could calculate by signs, a ravenous worm had raised — I suggested hell, but she reproved me — with her tomato plants. Aside from this she was rather chipper. Upon the whole, however, the time may not have been well sorted."

"Well sorted for what?"

"Toward that point I drift. There is always one

more atrocity for the reformed rapscallion to commit, marriage for convenience. Savvy? And sitting in the cool parlor, the scent of the bloomed boughs in the fireplace dying away in a faint and melancholy sniff, I said to myself, ' Colonel, this is love's nesting time.'

" She seemed to think so too, for her lip quivered as she cleared her throat of a rising lump of trouble, the still green memory of the tomato worm. ' Mrs. Goebek,' says I, recalling her poetic name and without much effort, ' this is a beautiful world.' ' Tolerable,' she answers, gazing out at her daughter Iphigenia, hanging over the gate. ' Mrs. Goebek, it is woman that makes the world so charming.' ' Oh, git out with your soft soap,' she says. ' Mrs. Goebek, I speak from a heart struggling with its emotional self. Don't be shocked. Be my wife.'

" Slowly withdrawing her eyes from Iphigenia, she bent them on me, broke 'em, in fact, for they flew into fragments of astonishment. ' Why, Colonel,' she says, ' how you skeer me. But I can't marry you, for I am going to marry the mayor. He asked me first, even went so far as to pay my taxes. Why didn't you ask me sooner? ' ' Madam,' says I, her name no longer poetic, ' I asked you as soon as I could catch my breath after our first meeting. Not knowing your address — not being aware of your existence, in fact — I couldn't telegraph my intentions before I arrived here.' And so I left her to work out her own bugological destiny."

" Everything considered, you acted wisely," said the meditative Poet.

Watkins said that he had been led to think so, although the edge of disappointment had been honed sharper on the fact of a more recent discovery, the truth coming

from the mayor himself that his suit had been granted by telephone only a few minutes before the colonel sought to file his claim. "Ah," said the most important man in town, feeling that by an inferior he had been outwitted, "there opens up no avenue of reprisal. But, George, I'm hamstrung if I ever read another book written for women. I will no further pay tribute to the scribbler who makes a study of feminine whim and who smirks his dribblings among women who flutter about him to ooze their appreciation of his 'art.' After this, man-books for the colonel."

"A desperate revenge," said the Poet. "But for my own throes of nympholepsy I might applaud. I might say that in literary art woman is a fashion, man eternal; but to me now, Colonel, all art, music, science — God — mean only a woman. And, wise old yellow Yal, do you really believe — "

"It's a cinch," the wise one swore.

Just as the train was pulling in, the town marshal came up: "Mr. Howerson, that old man Hudsic is dead."

. . . . . .

In his Pullman bunk, a curtained smother, the traveler lay, nor needed he the cry of a child, the fat man's snore to keep him awake. From clacking ribs of steel Yal's words rang out, "It's a cinch — a cinch, cinch," and he mused over the millions of distresses and of joys rhythmed by the wheels, year after year, minute after minute as man has rushed and is always rushing with impatience toward his end. Yielding to the insistent balm of the colonel's dogmatic foresight, he pictured himself in ecstasy, his hands full of the gnarled gold that wreathed Rose Whateley's head, her heart beating against his own, so tired with long aching. "A cinch — cinch!" He would trust old Yal. An exaggerator, an

eccentric? Yes, but truth was always borne upon the tide of his whimsey rill. And in this midget comfort the Poet dozed, to awake with the feeling that he was racing to the disastrous end of his "sentimental journey."

CHAPTER XLV.

STOOD WITH HER HEAD ERECT

In the Whateley library the evening lights were ablaze, and deep in thought the old man sat alone, one arm resting on a table where lay his few favorites, old books in big print, old friends of simple countenance. No business worry had dogged him home, and now he could sit in the ripest of all luxury, the indulgence of impersonal thought. But not for long. Old Paul slippered softly in to say, "Dr. Henshaw is very anxious to see you for a few moments, sir."

"Tell him to — come in."

The doctor entered, smiling with a light not too glaring but chastely regulated, and held forth his hand. "I trust, my dear Mr. Whateley, that in coming to offer my poor congratulations I do not at this hour intrude."

"Not at all. Sit down." When the doctor had seated himself, Whateley added: "But congratulations — what about?"

The Doctor said that he was astonished at such an inquiry. What about, when it was known that Mr. Whateley had become possessed of the richest railway in the West? Whateley told him not to worry, and then asked humorously, "Well, how do you find yourself?"

"Meaning as to health, I presume. In the bestowal of the crown of all blessings, health, the Lord is good to me." But not yet reassured as to the railway, the doctor suffered his smile to burn low. Whateley seemed to perceive foreign or domestic levy, and ahemed depre-

catingly of the success of Howerson's trip. The doctor pressed the tips of his fingers together, after the manner of men who have not the employment of tobacco.

"I had hoped," he began.

"By the way, Doctor," Whateley interrupted, foreseeing the touch, "there is something I have wanted for several days to speak to you about. Annie Zondish dropped out of the newspapers a month or so ago, and then, of all places, bobs up in my house. Not only this, but my daughter goes about with her, on mysterious journeys of mercy — an excellent thing — and accompanied by one other, yourself."

The doctor began to fidget about in his chair.

"No reproof, I assure you," Whateley went on. "But I should like to know how it all came about. I have asked my daughter, and she declares that she is not as yet at liberty to tell me. I didn't know but that you might be able to — ha — shed some light."

"Not a ray, my dear Mr. Whateley. I was admitted into your daughter's confidence, and requested to accompany her and Miss Zondish. But as to the cause that led the woman to your house I am in ignorance. Let me say, however, that I have seen her prove herself a kindly and most worthy person. And I am free to admit that my association with her has greatly opened my eyes. My journeys of late into places which I have in the past preached about but of which I was in total ignorance, have been of great heart and soul value to me; I may be neglecting my books, but I have found greater books in the library of human action, human distress. Mr. Whateley, it was not merely to congratulate you that I call here this evening, but for a higher and nobler purpose. My life is not all composed of narrow creed; I always possessed a heart, preoccupied in study, it is

true, but of late it has been quickened; and I am here to talk to you on business, Mr. Whateley."

"Good enough, Doctor. And what you say reminds me that your sermons have strengthened within the past few weeks. Keep on talking blue shirt instead of blue stocking and you'll have a house full every Sunday. I know that men in my position are charged with enmity toward the laboring classes, and in some instances this is true, but as for myself, I rate a man according to his brain. The poor man is not my adversary. I am fighting my battle with the rich, and the colors to be captured — money. But I have led myself off. You say you wish to talk business. Foreign or domestic?"

"Domestic. Mr. Whateley, in a neighborhood which I have visited lately there is a vast deal of what I might term — er — vicious ignorance. The people —"

"You want me to build them a church. Is that it?"

"Oh, no, no. They have churches."

"And live in vicious ignorance! But perhaps they won't go to church. . . . What is it you want me to do? Drive them in?"

"My dear Mr. Whateley, you persist in anticipating me the wrong way. Bear with me, please, for a brief time. The older ones of this neighborhood are practically beyond our reach; and what Miss Zondish and your daughter suggest, and which I most heartily approve, is to build a large manual training school; indeed, the Calvin Whateley Institute. Do you follow me?"

Old Calvin leaned back in his chair and scratched his head. "Yes, I follow, and most willingly, down to where the road forks."

"May I ask, Mr. Whateley, where the road forks?"

"At my name. If I should endow this school and give it my name, my motives would be misconstrued.

The public would look on it as an advertisement, or as a pretentious prayer, imploring the Lord to forgive as many of my sins as He could consistently. The school, however, shall be built by unidentified money, and splendidly equipped. But we'll have to settle on some other name. What is it, Paul?" The butler had entered.

"Why, sir, the woman I knew as Miss Evans but who now says her name's Zondish is out here, sir. She says you wished to see her."

"Yes," said Whateley; "yes, to be sure. Show her in."

When Annie Zondish entered the room the two men rose, the doctor performing the office of introduction; and it was an office, a speech, in fact, delivered in unctuous grandiloquence, settling for all time the differences of opinion held by capital and labor.

"Miss Zondish," said Whateley, "I can say truthfully that I wanted to meet you."

"Your daughter said you wished to see me, and I am here."

She stood with her hands clasped in front of her, head erect; but in her eyes there was not the fire that Rose had seen blaze and then die down to softened glow — not the blaze now but still the glow. She was dressed with exceeding modesty, but not in the studied misfit of repentance; and in old Calvin's eye there was a look of compliment. "Won't you please sit down?" he said.

"No, I thank you. You wished to see me?"

"For no special reason, Miss Zondish. Only to tell you that I am much pleased to hear of the work you are doing."

"And not to reproach me."

The old man laughed but more in tenderness than in

mirth. "I reproach you! I could not find it in my heart to do that."

"But they told me your heart was hard."

He did not laugh now. "Miss Zondish, report will always exaggerate the bad and the good. No man — ha — lives in true estimation. Won't you please sit down?"

Slowly she shook her head. Her old life, old ideas and principles still made faint protest against banishment. The two men remained standing. Whateley continued the subject, smiling: "I am not a saint, Miss Zondish. If I were, I'd not be in business. Men strike at me, and warding off their blows the best I can, I strike at them. Sometimes in my heat I may hit the wrong man, and it is the wrong blow that is always advertised. Down in North Carolina, when I was a boy, there lived an old fellow named Jackson. For the most part he spent his life doing good. When the widow's cow was about to be sold by the law, he was always there to buy the cow and give it back to her. But one day, in the village, celebrating the home-coming of an old friend, he took too much liquor, fell off his horse and was crippled; and ever after that he was known as Old Drunken Jackson. . . Miss Zondish, I hope you won't mind my asking you a few questions."

"Not at all, Mr. Whateley."

"Ah! Miss Zondish, not long ago you were the avowed advocate of the knife and the fire-brand. Then, all was violence. Now, among the lowly you are an agent of gentleness and mercy. Let me ask you what brought about this sudden change. How did you happen to meet my daughter?"

Until this moment Annie had stood motionless, hands clasped in front of her; now she turned, looked about as

if searching for something on the floor, on the walls. But before she answered she stood motionless again, hands together. "I found the weak too weak and the strong too strong," she said. "I found that I was one of the weakest of the weak, because I had wasted my force in emotional violence. I have not surrendered; I have entered upon a compromise. The world is not ready for brotherhood. . . . Have you not asked your daughter how she chanced to meet me?"

"Yes, but she won't tell me."

"Then why should you think that I am at liberty to tell? Do you think so mean of me as to suppose that I would betray her confidence?"

"Doctor," said Whateley, "as little Calvin would say, she has put it on me. No, Miss Zondish, I didn't think that ill of you. In fact I think highly of you. I believe you are doing as much good as anybody in this town. And the real honor of it is that there's no cant about your work. You are not decorating poverty with the trinkets of pretentious salvation. Wait a moment, Doctor." The good man was clearing his throat. "I am not going to say a word against the home work of your church. But Miss Zondish labors in the name of man, and when man finds man, man will find God. Don't worry about that, Doctor."

"My dear Mr. Whateley," the doctor protested, "you fire your rifle before the quail is flushed. You —"

"Rifle! Doctor, right there is one of the troubles of your class. You employ false illustrations and lose influence among men of the world. Rifle for flushed quails! Do you think that the Apostle Peter would have angled for minnows with a clothesline?"

"My dear Mr. Whateley, we are told that Peter employed a net."

"All right, Doctor; good enough. . . . Then, Miss Zondish, I suppose I shall have to wait for time and my daughter's whim to unfold the mystery."

"Perhaps it may be made clear after Mr. Howerson has returned," she said.

"Oh, you know Mr. Howerson? Then you know a most remarkable man."

"He is a genius, and an enemy might not wish him worse. He has a great heart for the world to crush. Are you through with me, Mr. Whateley?"

She turned to take her leave. "Don't go yet, Miss Zondish. My daughter will be home pretty soon, I think, and no doubt she has plans she would like to talk over with you."

"I should like to ask you," said the doctor, "why the world should seek to crush the heart of genius. The world rewards genius, with its wreath and often with its happiness. Was it not a reward for Luther to know that he had accomplished a great reformation? Must not John Calvin have felt that he had revealed a great system of truth?"

Miss Zondish stiffened, and bent upon the preacher a look almost of contempt. "It is hard for your church to recognize genius except within the white-washed palings of its own parsonage. But these men, measured by their own ambition, were both of them failures. The great Reformation is yet to come, the Christ of the mine, the loom and the forge."

At this moment a commotion arose in the hall. They heard little Calvin shout. . . . And Howerson entered, bearing the boy in his arms.

CHAPTER XLVI.

WHERE THE ROAD FORKED

It was not within conjecture that on an occasion of even so acute an excitement Dr. Henshaw could exhibit himself as one possessed of active foot, dignity being the censor of haste; but he was the first to reach Howerson and to seize upon him, before the Poet had even the chance to put the youngster down or indeed to respond to Whateley's cordial hail. And with this exuberant stir of atmosphere Annie Zondish came out of her statuesque reserve, to hang for a moment on Howerson's arm, when more than once Whateley had clapped him on the shoulder. Now she sat down.

Old Calvin laughed louder than any of them ever heard him laugh before, but the boy was there to turn off the hydrant of excessive spouting. On achievement along commercial lines he set no store; his friend, the strong man, had returned, and that meant more than bannered triumph proclaiming the conquest of distant empire. He sat on the Poet's knee.

"My papa had a Chinaman but they wouldn't let me see him; and they're going to take him and hang him; and to-day me and Pete tried to hang a cat, and you ought to seen him. He done this way with his hind feet. Look, grandpa."

The old man looked while the boy showed him.

"And Pete's shirt was nearly all tore off, and you bet we didn't hang that cat. He got up on the low shed on the other side of the alley, and grinned at us. Then

Pete's dog come and barked and howled because he couldn't get up there. But the milkman come along and put him on the shed, and the cat spit at him and he jumped off and pretended like he wanted to get back on the shed; but he didn't want to, did he, Mr. Howerson?"

"You bet he didn't," said the Poet. Dr. Henshaw, feeling that this was not the proper wording for an opinion delivered to a boy, came forward with euphemistic revision, setting forth that the dog, like over-zealous men, sought to establish a reputation for courage which it had been proved he did not in reality possess.

The boy looked at him and said, "You bet he didn't!" and old Calvin laughed.

"Tell Mr. Howerson what you did out at Fox River."

"Oh, yes; and I caught a fish and grandpa didn't; and he pulled and pulled but I brought him out. Wasn't that fine, Mr. Howerson?"

"That was great," said the Poet.

"An exciting event," Dr. Henshaw offered mildly as a substitute.

"Great," the boy would have it, and then proceeded to relate the gopher hunt. "And Aunt Rose — are you cold, Mr. Howerson?"

Howerson caught a kindly glance from Annie's eyes, a sympathetic smile from her lips, and then quickly he cast a look on Whateley's countenance, and found relief from the fear that the old man had wisely interpreted the youngster's words. He was talking to the doctor; but shortly afterward he bade the boy come to him and whispered, lips almost touching the little fellow's hair: "We have some business to talk over, and I want you to go to the Cabin and wait there for me."

Drawing the old man's head down closer, with arms

about his neck so that no one else might hear, he whispered, " And will Mr. Howerson come, too? "

" Yes, after a while. There is an apple tree stump in the fireplace. Tell Paul to set it afire, and it will sparkle."

" Just like when you was a boy? "

" Yes; and if you get sleepy, lie down on my bed, and the bugles will wake you up when the cavalry comes. Now run along."

He ran away, laughing; and they heard him shouting to the old butler, heard them both going up the stairs, imitating the bugle's call.

Annie arose to take her leave. " Wait," said Whateley. " We haven't yet taken Mr. Howerson into our council about that manual training school."

Here the doctor came forward with plans which Howerson feared might run into specifications for the guidance of the architect. And when with the bulbs of his fingers pressed together he had finished, nothing remained for settlement except the name. It was unfortunate that Mr. Whateley was determined to withhold his own identity from so munificent an endowment. This was concluded with an " ahem " so suggestive of argumentative resources shunted for the moment but to be coupled up again upon call, that Whateley ought to have yielded, but he did not. He looked at Howerson, and without hesitation the Poet said that the name suggested itself, the " Annie Zondish Institute."

Whateley declared it an inspiration, and the doctor nodded, smiling; and yet shrewdness if inclined toward mischief might have deducted a mild protest against a feminine name for so masculine an establishment. Indeed, why not the " Henshaw Institute "? But the doctor said nothing. Like a politician forced by " love

of country " to second the nomination of his rival, he ate with a sickly smack his dish of patriotic crow.

For a moment Annie looked frightened. " Surely, you don't mean that," she said to Howerson, to Whateley, appealing from one to the other.

" The school is named," said Howerson.

" Named," said Whateley.

" Yes, ah — a — hem! " from the doctor.

" I shall not try to conceal my pride in the name," the woman was quick to acknowledge. " I know I do not deserve such honor, but I shall make myself worthy of it. Mr. Whateley, charity as we continue to practice it, is more a crime than a virtue. I read in history that the monasteries were the cause of poverty during the Middle Ages, and if indiscriminate giving was bad then, it is worse now. The proper education of the youth of to-day will prevent the poverty of to-morrow. Doctor, your book says cleanliness is next to godliness. Let the future book say that industry, knowing how to do a thing well, *is* godliness. Mr. Whateley — "

Miss Gwin, Whateley's stenographer, was shown into the room. She looked about in fright as falteringly she advanced, an indecisive chicken, " shooed " gently by old Paul. Whateley spoke to her kindly, and Howerson offered her his chair, but she seemed afraid to sit down.

Whateley spoke: " Miss Gwin, you didn't come to the office to-day."

" My mother wasn't well enough for me to come, sir."

" And I expressed a wish to see you," the old man continued. " But I didn't expect you to come away out here. Er — I suppose your mother knows that the Superior Court has reversed the decision in her case against me? "

She drooped. "Yes, sir, she knows it, and it was a hard blow. And now you are going to discharge me, sir?"

"Let us stick to the matter in hand, Miss Gwin. The Superior Court says that I don't owe your mother five thousand dollars. But Mr. Howerson investigated the case and says that I do." He turned to the table and took up a slip of paper, held it out to her. "So here is a check for six thousand, one thousand for you. You are a good girl, Miss Gwin."

She could not take the check. She reached forth her hand, but powerless it fell, and she sobbed. Howerson took her gently by the arm, put the check into her hand and hushed her as he would a child. When she could speak, she said:

"Mr. Whateley, mother and I will pray for you."

"Yes, that's all right," said the old man. "But not in public. Damn it — beg your pardon, ladies, and Dr. Henshaw." And then he laughed. "I don't want it noised about that I am easy, but after all one of man's greatest consolations is to feel that he is an agent of justice."

Miss Gwin murmured that she must go, and Whateley nodded his approval. "Yes, you'd better go home at once," he said. "The check will do your mother more good than medicine."

"A goodly, a very goodly sum," the doctor spoke up, his mouth slightly watering. When Miss Gwin had taken her grateful leave, turning at the door meekly to give Whateley a tearful look, Annie Zondish said that she too must be on her way. With swift motion she seized old Calvin's hand. "Mr. Whateley, I hope you will forgive me for the evil I thought of you."

" Miss Zondish, I am unfortunately not of a very forgiving nature, but as I don't believe you ever intended me any real harm, I can easily say I forgive you."

Before he reached the end of this speech she had looked at Howerson, caught his eye, foreseeing the trial through which he was soon to pass; but in his countenance she saw no weakness. And when he had gone with her to the door she said: " You will find me at the old place, George." He held her hand and was silent. " I have waited a long time for you to come back. . . . You will not falter."

" No. . . . And I will shield you."

" I forbid. Why should you? "

" To save the name of the school."

" Spare nothing in the way of truth. . . . Come to me early to-morrow."

" Perhaps to-night." he said.

Meanwhile the doctor was taking his leave. Old Calvin was cordial, laughed over him, told him to " drop in " whenever he felt disposed. They heard him bid old Paul good night, heard the door close, and then with bright and confidential countenance Whateley turned to Howerson, both standing. " Ha, no matter how liberal we think he is, the atmosphere is sometimes clearer when the preacher's gone. Mr. Howerson, George — "

" But Henshaw seems to be kind-hearted," Howerson interrupted.

" Oh, yes, he is improving, but is held back from complete reformation. That would put him out of his church. We may be freethinkers ourselves, in private, but we demand that our preacher shall be more or less of a poser. Sit down and let us talk."

" But first I must tell you of something that is of heavier importance — to me," said Howerson.

"Ah, some favor to ask? Don't hesitate. You could hardly ask a favor I would not grant."

"Mr. Whateley, I have a confession to make to you, one that — "

"Yes — ah, by the way, I gave employment about a week ago to a man you recommended. He presented your letter, and as he didn't appear to be capable of any kind of office work, he is now on duty here about the house."

"Letter from me, Mr. Whateley? I gave no one a letter."

"Not to a man named Everharte? "

"To nobody."

"That's strange."

He went to the door and called to the old butler. "Find Everharte and tell him to come here." Returning to his chair he stood beside it, looking at Howerson. "Very strange. He has asked repeatedly as to when you might be back. I didn't like his looks much, but as he had a letter which I would have sworn was in your handwriting, I employed him."

Howerson moved over toward the door listening, alert. "I think I understand," he said.

"Ah, soon we shall both understand, no doubt."

"Yes, very soon."

Howerson stood waiting, Whateley wondering; both silent. Footsteps sounded down the hall, quickening as nearer they drew, almost running; and into the room came Henk. Upon seeing Howerson so close to him he drew back, but Howerson moved toward him. "You infamous scoundrel! "

Henk sprang back, clapping his hand to his hip, but his courage failed, and he cowered, a pistol half out of his pocket. Howerson seized upon him, crushed him

writhing to the floor, snatched away his pistol, and with one hand at his throat, raised the weapon to strike him.

"Don't — please don't. I give up."

Howerson let him up. Whateley was still standing beside the chair, wondering, frost in his countenance. Howerson, holding Henk by the collar, looked toward the old man. He came forward a few steps, halted and spoke; and his words came cold: "Drag him out and turn him over to the policeman at the corner. Be as quiet as you can; I don't want anybody to know."

"Come on," Howerson commanded; and with his hand on the wretch's collar he dragged him out, down the walk and through the gate, and outside, stood him against the fence.

"Don't choke me. I won't try to get away."

Howerson released his collar, but stood confronting him. The moon was shining and he could see the wretch trembling. Henk spoke: "We were brothers once."

"Don't call me your brother. I'll choke the life out of you."

"Yes, you could do it. You are strong. But I am weak in every way. I would have shot you, but you looked at me and it killed the liquor in me, and my heart stopped. I am not a man of blood. I think so till the time comes and then I am not. I ought to have known that I couldn't shoot you. I tried to the night you came at us with the sword, and my heart weakened on me. This time I thought I could brace myself and die a martyr, but it's not in me. I saw Annie Zondish come here, but I didn't let her see me, for I knew that she too had deserted us. But I never had murder in my heart except when I was in liquor. Mr. Howerson, let me go, and you will never hear of me again. The whole scheme

is a failure — we have all found that out. You are to be rich and respected and I am to go to the penitentiary. Let me off. I will go away somewhere and work at my trade. I am a bricklayer and a good one. I will let liquor alone, too. I have done it years at a time before my home was broken up and I fell back into drink. But I won't do it again. Let me go."

"What you tell me may be true," said Howerson. "I don't know. But I do know that when I try to stand in judgment over you, the ground is slippery beneath my feet. Just now you were planning to harm me, no one else, and in that belief I can forgive you. Go away somewhere and work. Here." Into Henk's hand he thrust a roll of bank notes. "About a hundred and ten dollars, I think. My scheme may fail, five times out of ten, but I am going to see it through."

Henk was now tall against the fence. "Mr. Howerson," he said, "if I believed in a God, I would call on him to bless you."

"Whether you believe it or not He exists, and this night infused me with His mercy or I would have killed you. Here, take your pistol."

"No, no, I don't want it."

"Take it and throw it into the river."

He took the pistol, shuddering as he touched it. He turned away but looked back. "If there is a God, I say God bless you."

. . . . . .

The old man was walking up and down the room. Seeing Howerson enter he went quickly to his chair and sat down. "We shall hear nothing further from him," said the Poet.

The old man sat looking down at the floor. "Why

did he want to kill you?" he asked, still looking down. Howerson halted not far from Whateley's chair, and remained standing.

"I told you that I had a confession to make."

"Yes, and I begin to suspect that it is a desperate one."

"It is."

"Why have you waited so long?"

"Let us call the delay a want of courage."

"No." The old man looked up. "In that quality, sir, you are not lacking."

"Then let us say a want of moral courage."

"Very well. Go ahead."

"Mr. Whateley —" From the hall there came a voice, a bit of song, a heart song without words, and the old man looked down again, and Howerson, stricken dumb, stood with head bowed in silence. When he raised his eyes Rose Whateley was coming toward him, a melodious hush of welcome on her lips, in her eyes; and then — "Oh, Mr. Howerson!" She held out her hands, englorying him with a look. He caught her hands, trying to laugh. He strove to speak, but his heart bent back his words.

The old man's chair creaked. "Mr. Howerson has something to say to me."

"Oh," she laughed, "something that I mustn't hear? I beg your pardon."

"Wait, please," Howerson cried. "It is something that you *must* hear — something due you — something no other woman would have waited for so patiently."

"I will stay," she said, and sat down near the table, to the right of her father. The old man lighted a cigar. Howerson stood off a few paces, and about him now there clung no barn-storming air. Ah, it had been easier to

rush upon those avenging agents, making the air whistle with his sword.

They waited, the old man smoking, Rose leaning forward, her arms folded upon the table. Howerson saw her but dared not to look into her eyes. He looked at the old man.

"Mr. Whateley —"

The old man looked at him, through thin smoke, and in the fog his eyes glinted cold. "Go ahead, sir."

"Mr. Whateley — a failure, morbid, a would-be suicide, I became a member, I don't know how, of a desperate brotherhood calling itself the 'Agents of Justice.'"

"Anarchists!" the old man interrupted him.

Howerson nodded his head. "Murderers without nerve, who believed that they had a mission. . . . I was elected to kill you."

Slowly the old man blew smoke upward. Howerson glanced at Rose. Her head had sunk down upon her folded arms.

"In rags, with right hand uplifted, I took an oath to assassinate you or to forfeit my own life — I from an old Puritan family, I the son of a man who feared God. In rags — and in that condition I could not come near you. So they put fine clothes on me and sent me forth on my mission of murder. I felt as one who was appointed to kill and then to die a martyr to truth and justice. In the disordered state of my mind I looked upon myself as a true Christian. The first clear view I had of my altered outward condition I caught from a mirror in the waiting-room of your office. I looked not like an outcast but like a gentleman, and I was startled. Still I was a martyr and would execute my mission. My card came back from you with the demand that I must

name my business. Then I remembered having heard some men talking in the elevator, about waterworks at Glenwich, and this gave me a desperate cue. I seized upon it and was admitted. I would have shot you on sight, but conscious of the power I held over you, the ability to kill you in a moment, I was prompted to ask you some vital question, to hear what defence you would make, but I could summon no question. And I would then have shot you, but at this moment in ran little Calvin."

Whateley looked at him, smoke slowly issuing from his mouth.

"Then you were called out, and then came — came — "

He looked at Rose. She had raised her head, and she seemed in a struggle to keep down a sob.

"You returned, and before I could realize what I was doing, I had accepted a commission from you. I was inspired to execute that and other commissions; and I am not asking or expecting pardon when I tell you that of gain for myself I have had not a thought. There could have been no sacrifice of self that I would not have made. . . . During a long time I lived in constant dread of being shot down, and one night — "

The voice of old Paul broke in upon him: "Judge Brockworth says he must see you at once, sir — says he's in a hurry to catch a train and can't wait."

Old Calvin got up. "Show him in there," he commanded, motioning toward the Inquisition. Without looking at Howerson he strode out, strong and cold, Howerson's sad eyes following him.

"And they were trying to kill you."

He started. Rose was standing near him.

"Yes, when you came to save my life."

"Then I was — of some service to you. I have tried to believe so. Sometimes I was tempted to ask Annie Zoudish, but I remembered my promise."

"I don't feel now that I was worth it all," he said. "Perhaps it would have been better if they had killed me."

She shook her head, the gnarled gold of her hair lustrous in the light. "You must not say that."

"Then you have in your heart at least some forgiveness for me!" She was not looking at him now. He came nearer, glancing quickly toward the door through which Whateley had passed; and it was not the hope of man's forgiveness that was spurring his heart to gallop; it was the hope that his soul might not die. He spoke low. "To stand one moment at that door, as we — I stood that night, was worth a thousand years of toil and of dread." She was trembling, looking down, her wonderful poise broken. Nearer he stood. "To-day while my train was on a sidetrack, I went into a garden, long ago given over to neglect and to weeds. But in the midst of the wilderness there grew a rosebush, and on it bloomed a lone rose, the last of its race. I have brought it to you, its namesake."

Into his bosom he thrust his hand and drew forth a rose, the glory of a summer, and held it out to her. She took it, looking into his eyes; she held the rose to her lips, to his lips, the rose fell to the floor and their lips touched — and in his arms he enfolded her, with the shouting of his heart deafening him; and the gnarled gold was on his bosom.

"Our play," he said. "It was written for us."

"For us," she repeated.

"It had to be — it was woven from the threads of our lives. . . . Come with me."

"Yes, I come. . . . From the first I knew that I should come when you called me."

They heard old Calvin bid the judge good night, heard him coming, and stood apart. Howerson, took up the rose, gave it to her, and she put it into the shimmering gold of her hair.

The old man did not resume his seat. He did not seem to know that anything had chanced during his absence, that the world had been created anew. He spoke and his voice was low. "Mr. Howerson, you say that I was saved by a little child. Out there at the edge of the sidewalk to-night a drum beat, women sang, and the light of a torch fell upon the soft countenances of men — countenances once hardened by dissipation and crime. These men were turned toward gentleness by the story of a little child. . . . The man to trust, Mr. Howerson, is the man that has been tried. You have been tried. You did not save me, but you yourself were saved. I do not forgive you because you have been of value to me, but because you are the most unselfish and honorable man I have ever known. I understand it all."

"Do you understand — everything, father?" Rose asked of him, while Howerson stood as if beneath the balm of a benediction.

He looked at her, at the Poet. "Often I was at a loss to make you out, Mr. Howerson — and then I read you with Calvin's eyes. . . . Yes, Rose, I understand everything."

They heard the boy calling. Clad in his wolfskin coat he stood in the door. "Grandpa, please come on."

"Yes," said the old man; "yes, we are coming now." He turned to Rose and to Howerson: "Come, and let us go into the Cabin and play with little Calvin."

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